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PHILOSOPHY FOR  
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THE BOOK OF JOAD

THE TESTAMENT OF JOAD

GUIDE TO MODERN WICKEDNESS

ETC.

# PHILOSOPHY FOR OUR TIMES

*by*

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# INTRODUCTORY



# INTRODUCTORY

## CHAPTER I

### THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

PHILOSOPHY is often charged with a failure to produce results. In contrast with steady progress in the world of science, where each generation builds upon the foundations laid by its predecessors, the history of philosophy appears as a series of marches and counter-marches in the course of which each philosopher seeks to overthrow the conclusions which his predecessor has sought to establish. Now it must be admitted that, unlike science which has produced motor cars, electric light and anæsthetics as well as poison gas, explosive bombs and fast-flying aeroplanes from which they may be dropped upon defenceless people, philosophy has no concrete results to show. For philosophy is concerned not so much with producing as with understanding.

#### *The Plight of Civilization.*

To an age governed by the stomach-and-pocket view of life and accustomed to demand of every activity professed for its approval that it shall "deliver the goods," understanding seems no doubt an inadequate object of pursuit. Yet something is, it is obvious, grievously wrong

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with our civilization, and it is high time we set about the business of trying to "understand" what it is. Science has won for us powers fit for the gods, yet we bring to their use the mentality of schoolboys or savages. We can talk across continents and oceans, install television sets in the home, hear Big Ben striking in North Borneo ; photographs speak and sing ; X-rays are the windows through which we observe and snapshot our insides ; roads are made of rubber ; crops ripened by electricity ; hair waved by electric current ; distance melts, and the aeroplane girdles the earth. In a word, the power that machines have given us has transformed human life ; yet so little are we able to make a proper use of this power that, instead of using our machines as a means to the good life, we delegate to them the very functions of living. We live a press-the-button existence ; we no longer walk ; we go out in the car. We no longer climb ; we go up in the lift. We no longer converse ; we turn on the radio. We no longer sing or make music ; we put on a record. I once visited some friends in America for a game of bridge. Delightedly they drew my attention to a new gadget which relieved the players of the duty of dealing the cards. One placed the gadget upon the table, one pressed a button, and a mechanism began to rotate, spraying out the cards to each of the four players. My host was very proud of this gadget ; it was wonderful, he said, thus to be saved the trouble of dealing. Politely I echoed his admiration. "But why," I asked, "not go further and invent a machine which would save one the trouble of playing ? How delightful to have one's bridge played for one !" . . .

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My host did not see the point of these remarks, which he considered to be in bad taste.

### *Mastery of Means and Ignorance of Ends.*

Thus in a thousand ways we delegate to machines the functions of living. And to what uses do we put the time and energy that they have saved for us? We have driven at seventy miles an hour, a danger to ourselves and a nuisance to everybody else, in order to do what? . . . To spend another five minutes in the lounge of our hotel, to tell another story, drink another cocktail, or desultorily to turn over the pages of a picture paper exhibiting persons of no distinction performing activities of no importance. Thus men move heaven and earth to screw an extra five miles an hour out of the "old bus" in order to save ten minutes, without the faintest idea what to do with them when they have saved them. When we tire of our machines, we whack little round bits of matter with long thin ones in the shape of cues, sticks, mallets, bats, clubs, and rackets; or we go and kill something. . . . Are these, one wonders, adequate occupations for the heirs of all the ages? As an Indian sage said to me once in acid comment upon our civilization—I had been led unwittingly into praise of one of its technical marvels—"Yes, you can fly in the air like birds and swim in the sea like fishes, but how to walk upon the earth you do not yet know."

Finally, when war comes, as come it has, our new-won powers may well destroy us altogether. For the plain truth is that we cannot any longer afford the luxury

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of indulging our aggressive impulses. Our powers of destruction are grown too great.

### *The Mood of the Young.*

While our civilization hangs on the verge of destruction through its inability to control the powers which science has conferred upon it, young men and women wander aimlessly along the road of life without knowing whither they are travelling, or why indeed they travel at all. In a word, they are without creed or code, standards or values. It is only to-day that the misfortune of this lack is coming to be realized, and since, if I may mix my metaphors, it constitutes the peg upon which the book that follows is to be hung, I propose to dwell for a moment upon its significance. We live at the end of an age of demolition. Shaw and Wells and, later, Aldous Huxley took the lay figures of nineteenth-century dignity and respectability, passed through their ribs the rapier of their wit, and let out some sawdust and a little bran. With this bran and sawdust the contemporary young man's mind is littered. It is a waste land strewn with the rubbish of demolished temples.

### *An Age without Religion.*

Take, first, religion. There has grown to maturity a generation which is to all intents and purposes without religious belief. To say that, as a result, life has for it no point and the universe no purpose would be true, but it would not be the most important truth. More

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important is the fact that; to the present generation, it is a matter of no interest whether life has a point, the universe a purpose or not. It does not care and, therefore, it does not inquire. As a result, the questions which have been asked in every age except our own, in our own remain not only unanswered but unasked. I recently questioned a class of twenty students, young men and women for the most part in the early twenties, with a view to discovering how many of them were in any sense of the word Christians. Only three said that they were ; eight had never thought about the matter one way or the other, while the remaining nine were belligerently anti-Christian. I also asked how many regularly attended a place of worship. Two attended regularly, four occasionally, the remainder not at all. And the occasionals were very occasional ; one young man had recently been to a church for the first time since he could remember, in order to attend the christening of the first baby of Mr. Matthews of Stoke City, an international football player. . . . I see no reason to suppose that the proportion of believers to non-believers, of attenders to non-attenders, indicated by these replies is in any way exceptional.

### *Or Moral Code.*

In the sphere of conduct there is a general repudiation of all those restraints and inhibitions which the Victorians pretentiously called their morals. For Victorian morality *was* largely inhibitory. It prescribed not so much what a man must do, if he would be saved, as what he must not do, if he would avoid the censure of society. The



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society whose censure must be avoided largely disappeared with the war, and in the post-war years many of the traditional restraints went by the board. A number of causes contributed to this result. First, there was the decline of traditional religion. We should be good, we used to be told, because goodness is pleasing to God. He loves an upright man ; He also likes him to be temperate and continent. Once the practice of virtue is identified with pleasing God, it becomes difficult to ignore the respective consequences of His pleasure and His displeasure. Most religions have taken care to paint these consequences in the liveliest colours, with the result that it is difficult to say how much so-called virtuous conduct has been prompted by the desire to achieve an eternity of celestial bliss, and to avoid an eternity of infernal torment.

It is notorious to-day that heavenly rewards no longer attract and infernal punishments no longer deter with their pristine force ; young people are frankly derisive of both, and, seeing no prospect of divine compensation in the next world for the wine and kisses that morality bids them eschew in this one, take more or less unanimously to the wine and kisses.

### *Effects of Psycho-Analysis.*

These tendencies are reinforced by the effect of psychology and, more particularly, of psycho-analysis. This operates in two ways. First, psycho-analysis asserts that the seat of our desires is in the unconscious. Now we do not know what is going on in the unconscious. If we did,

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it would not be unconscious but, in respect of our knowledge of it, conscious. If we do not know we cannot, it is obvious, control. Therefore, we cannot control the manifestation of an unconscious desire in consciousness. As for conscience, by which evil desires have traditionally been censured, and will, by means of which they have been restrained, these, too, are only, it seems, manifestations of unconscious elements in our *psyche* ; in point of fact, of feelings of unconscious guilt. Moreover, the degree of their strength relatively to the desires which they censure and seek to control is also outside our control. The practical expression of these beliefs is fatalistic. We are as we are, our personalities being the end results of the interplay of a vast number of influences, forces and promptings which lie beyond our ken. Our characters, therefore, are made not by us, but for us. Hence, the admonition to control ourselves is beside the point and *tout comprendre est tout pardonner*.

Secondly, psycho-analysis is responsible for the conviction that in the suppression of impulse or the thwarting of desire there is something definitely harmful. The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it, said Oscar Wilde, and much modern psychology seems anxious to give his epigram an academic backing. The *libido*, the central fount of our energy, is likened by Freud to an underground spring of water which seeks an outlet. Dam the spring and, turned back upon itself, it overflows into a stagnant marsh which presently seeps through into consciousness and poisons our personality with its noxious humours and noisome exhalations. The marsh is the complex, the humours and exhalations, the thousand

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and one neuroses and phobias of modern life which psycho-analysis seeks to cure by removing the repressions and letting the suppressed desires out into the light of day. To the effects of this teaching the novels of D. H. Lawrence, with their insistence upon the importance of self-expression, their hatred of convention and of the inhibitions imposed by convention, have powerfully contributed.

### *Fear of War and Unemployment.*

But perhaps the most important of the influences making for the disintegration of morals is the international situation. Young men and women have grown up into a world overshadowed by the nightmare fear of war. Only an optimist can look forward to long years of peaceful living, and not to countenance the possibility of a catastrophe which may at any moment snatch life away, is to refuse to face obvious facts. Even in the days before the war it was no easy thing for young men and women to view their futures with equanimity. Here is no secure world needing their services and offering in return for honest work an honourable career. Here is a world of little work, and of rivalry, struggle, and competition for the little that there is. There are too many stories going the round of the schools and universities to-day of expensively educated young women subsiding into jobs behind the counters of big London stores, or competing for the privilege of transcribing, for a wage of £3 a week, the letters of some illiterate business executive with half their brains and none of their qualifications, to inspire hope for the future in the intelligent

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and enterprising members of a sex which, debarred for centuries from careers, has been taught that at long last it might look forward to useful and honourable employment in the world. War and unemployment cast a shadow over the young and make them disinclined for any but a short-term view of life, which, taking pleasures as they come, places all pleasures on an equal footing. The attitude is not new ; it occurs in every civilization which feels the breath of decay as it declines to its close. In the eighth book of Plato's *Republic* Socrates describes the character of the democratic man, defined as one who considers that all his desires are equally honourable, and that he is entitled, therefore, to indulge each and every one as it makes its appearance.

“ When he is told that some pleasures belong to appetites that are good and honourable and others to appetites that are bad, and that the former should be practised and respected, and the latter checked and brought into subjection, he will not accept this sound doctrine or admit it into his castle. At all these statements he shakes his head and maintains that all appetites are alike and ought equally to be respected. So he lives his life through from day to day, gratifying the casual appetites, one day drunk and listening to jazz, another fasting and drinking only water, and then again going into training ; sometimes idle and neglecting everything, then living like a philosopher. Often he goes into politics, and starts up and speaks and acts on the impulse of the moment. Perhaps he admires some military people,

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and inclines in that direction ; or he may take to trade, because he envies the successful business man. There is no order or compulsion in his life ; but he calls this existence pleasant and free and happy and follows it out to the end."

Plato was writing at a time not dissimilar from our own, when traditional morals and beliefs had been thrown overboard, when the future seemed uncertain, and when, as a consequence, unlimited indulgence in the more obvious pleasures suggested itself as the only tolerable recipe for good living.

Morality, restraint, the formation of character, the strengthening of will, the conviction that some parts of our nature are desirable and should be encouraged, and that others should be controlled—all these form part of what might be called a long term attitude to life. But if our tenure of life is uncertain, why bother ? If we are going to work dully at dull jobs all the rest of our lives, why not enjoy ourselves now ?

" Oh, Hell ! " say the young, recoiling from the prospect. " Everything is frightful. Let's go and have a drink somewhere and then dance."

### *Apathy in regard to Politics.*

The same sense of discouragement inhibits, save in a few, any genuine concern for politics. When I was growing up, one could take it for granted that an intelligent young man would be passionately interested in politics. It was a time of change and a time of hope.

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Inspired by Shaw, Wells, and the Fabians, we really believed that we could make the bad old world anew and mould it nearer to our heart's desire. What was more, we believed that we could do this by Act of Parliament. We had only, we thought, to elect a Socialist majority to Parliament, and then, by gradual but regular and steady stages, it would proceed to inaugurate a social and economic millennium, overthrow privilege and vested interests, and abolish poverty and social injustice. To-day, such beliefs are abandoned. To-day, apart from the usual war-time optimism, few men hope any longer to introduce a new world, or establish a better society ; their one concern is to salvage what remains of the old.

The one living political belief which inspires the contemporary young is Communism, which holds that it is only by a violent break with the existing system that a new order of society can be introduced and that this violent break—Communists have Lenin's authority for saying so—may well extend over a whole epoch of external and civil war. A few years ago, this belief was held with passionate intensity and filled for many young men and women at the universities the vacuum which religion had left. Moreover, it was exceedingly widespread. It was ten chances to one that the intelligent and politically-conscious young man with whom one bandied opinions, the informed and aggressive speaker who rose at one's meetings was a Communist. Here, then, it seemed, was a repository into which the accumulating fund of unexpended seriousness by which the young people of this generation are plainly embarrassed might be poured. But even over the Communist sky

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there is a cloud of spreading discouragement. It may be the spots that have appeared on the Russian sun—the Russia of Poland's partition is no longer a channel to catch the waters of youthful idealism—it may be the conviction of the hopelessness of any attempt to introduce Communism in this country except as a result of breakdown through war—and, though logic may accordingly demand that one plans for war, who, knowing modern war for what it is, would have the hardihood to practise such logic?—or it may be merely the fact of war itself which, like a drawn shutter, cuts off the prospect of the future. Whatever the reason, Communism no longer seems to me to exert its hold of a few years ago upon the allegiance of politically-minded young people. The Labour Clubs at Oxford and Cambridge still exhibit the same parade of Left Wing speakers; the shelves of their members are still arrayed with the products of the Left Book Club writers; and, like proselytes reciting the articles of their newly learnt creed, they still treat the most casual conversation as a disc upon which to play the well-worn records of Marxist philosophy. Yet the old excitement is missing. Communism has become a convention, where it used to be a revelation; it is to-day a fashion to be followed rather than a truth to be fought for.

*Foreheads defiantly Low.*

In literature and art there is a similar *malaise*. The effects of post-war “debunking” are to be seen in a deliberate and defiant “lowbrowism.” To be observed reading Shakespeare is a ground for shame; to be seen

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reading the *Daily Blank* or the *Pictorial Blanker* a cause for congratulation. The contemporary lowbrowism is not merely a matter of fact ; it is an affirmation of values. In one of Huxley's essays he describes how " Mr. Ernest Hemingway ventures, once, to name an Old Master. There . . . is a single phrase, no more, ' the bitter nail-holes ' of Mantegna's Christ ; then quickly, quickly, appalled by his own temerity, the author passes on (as Mrs. Gaskell might hastily have passed on, if she had somehow been betrayed into mentioning a water closet), passes on shamefacedly to speak once more of Lower Things."

Hemingway's feeling of shame is shared by the contemporary young. It is not so much that they read the *Daily Blank* and gaze at the *Pictorial Blanker* ; more to the point is that such reading and such gazing are a source of pride, whereas poetry, if at all, must be consumed privily by night. The result is curious. When my generation was growing to maturity there was a galaxy of great writers from whom to choose our reading. Behind us were the great Victorians ; contemporary were Shaw and Wells, Galsworthy and Bennett ; appearing above the horizon of the future were Lawrence and Joyce. Naturally we had our favourites—I can remember speaking very warmly at a meeting of a College Society on whether Hardy or Meredith was the greater novelist—but there was among us a certain area of common reading familiarity which could be taken for granted. We had all, for example, read *Mr. Polly* and *Kipps* and *Candida* and *The Idiot*. To-day there are no comparable authors and, accordingly, there is no area of common reading



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which can be taken for granted. The fact is one of which I was made suddenly aware by talking with a young student, politically conscious, keenly interested in affairs, who was training for a journalistic career. What, I wanted to know, did he read? I was startled by his ignorance into feeling the full burden of my age; for only the very middle-aged can be so shocked by the young. It was not merely that he had not read *Mr. Polly* and *Kipps*; that he had only vaguely heard of Shaw and did not know whether he were alive or dead; that he had not heard of Yeats at all, and that, when I lent him *The Idiot*, he could not get through it and inquired in bewilderment what was its point; more significant was the fact that in his literary firmament there were no stars to take the place of the great men of the past. What, then, did he read? "Penguins," the publications of the Left Book Club, pamphlets, articles, anything which seemed to be authoritative and gave him the illusion of being "in the know."

Examples could be multiplied indefinitely. Mr. H. G. Wells reports on the young people he met upon a recent cruise as "being as nice and uneducated a lot as one could well imagine. One or two of the young men had read and thought in a rather puzzled uninterrogative way, along the lines of Aldous Huxley and the Left Book Club. The rest appeared completely innocent of any religious, political, or social questioning."

I was recently interviewed by an enterprising young journalist who was so good as to profess an interest in my views on broadcasting. I am passionately fond of the music of Bach, and ventured to express the opinion that

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it would be a good thing if more of such music were made available for listeners. The interview duly appeared in one of the magazines devoted to broadcasting, and, rather to my surprise, most of my opinions appeared in the form in which I had expressed them. One only had been excised, that which expressed my favourable verdict on Bach. I inquired the reason. Most of his readers, the editor was reported to have said, were unable to distinguish between the music of Bach and the sound of water gurgling down a plug hole. It was bad policy to praise too openly that which they despised so heartily. But Bach, I protested, was a great man, an acknowledged master of music: surely, I asked, there could be no harm in making one's offering on so conventional an altar? But, I was assured, my opinions were very far from being conventional. It was not merely, I was told, that nobody now listened to Bach, more to the point was that nobody any longer took the trouble to pretend to like what they did not listen to.

### *The Snobbery of Anti-Culture.*

In a word, the snobbery of culture has been replaced by a snobbery of anti-culture. Tennyson, living in the Victorian age, maintained that man loved the highest when he saw it. It has been left to us to make the discovery that he is more likely to heave a brick at it.

The effects of this eclipse of the literary and artistic gods of the past can be seen in a prevailing lack of seriousness, and a widespread denial of values. The years from

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seventeen to twenty-four are the blossoming years of the intellect and the spirit. They are also the time of its greatest receptiveness. What one reads in these years may well have a profound effect upon the rest of one's life. But if nothing then catches the imagination, quickens the emotion, or touches the spirit to great issues, reading will come to seem a trivial thing, a way of passing the time like any other, not an experience which may score itself indelibly on the memory, as the works of Shaw and Hardy once scored themselves on mine.

### *The Climate of the Age.*

Here, then, is an age which is without beliefs in religion, without standards in morals, without convictions in politics, without values in art. I doubt if there has ever been an age which was so completely without standards or values. Upon some of the effects of this indifference and agnosticism I shall comment in later chapters. They are, I am convinced, disastrous. I have remarked that the modern generation suffers from a fund of unexpended seriousness. I now add that it suffers from a repressed need to believe. Its agnosticism, in short, is not only widespread, but wistful. Tell us what to think, and how to act ; tell us, in a word, how we are to be saved. Such has been the unspoken plea of the last ten years. It is only to-day that the need is coming into consciousness, and begins to find articulate expression. Now a life without standards or values, a life devoid of beliefs, is *par excellence* a bored and a boring life ; and this generation is *par excellence* a bored generation. A

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parable of Oscar Wilde puts the point far better than I could hope to do.

The parable recounts how, shortly after His ascension, Jesus comes down from heaven in the shape of a dove to visit the world and see how it has fared since He left it. As He is descending to earth, He glances through the window of an attic and sees a man lying on his bed, racked with headache, the result of an overnight drunken debauch. "What on earth is the matter with you," asks Jesus, "that you spend your time getting drunk?" "Lord, I was sick and you healed me," replies the man. "What else was I to do?" As He alights in the street, still in the shape of a dove, Jesus sees another man, running after a painted harlot. He asks him, "Have you nothing better than this to do with yourself?" "Lord, I was blind and you gave me sight," returns the man. "What else was I to do?" Jesus sees a third man, cursing and weeping and bemoaning his lot. "And what, pray, is the trouble with you?" asks Jesus. "Lord," he replies, "I was dead and you raised me. What else am I to do?"

### *The Relevance of Philosophy.*

The question may be asked, what is the relevance of the plight of our civilization to philosophy? This book is an attempt to answer the question. I will, however, try here to give my answer in brief. Philosophy is concerned not with phenomena, but with their meaning; not with facts, but with values; not with what is, but with what ought to be; not with means, but with ends.

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Typical of the questions which philosophy asks are the following : Has the Universe any plan or purpose, or is it merely a fortuitous concourse of atoms ? Is the human mind a fundamental feature of the Universe, a key to the interpretation of the rest, or is it a mere accident, an eddy in the primæval slime, doomed one day to finish its pointless journey with as little significance as it once began it ? Are good and evil real principles existing independently of men, or are they merely the names which men give to the things of which they approve or disapprove ? Is there one thing and one alone which is good, in terms of which we value everything else ? Or is there a number of separate and independent goods ? Or is there nothing good except our own pleasures and the satisfaction of our own appetites ? Is our duty something which we ought to do, even though the heavens fall, or is it merely a word with which we justify ourselves, when we wish to, make ourselves disagreeable to others ? Are there certain principles which, taken together, constitute a formula for the achievement of happiness, or is the only way to be happy to satisfy our desires and give way to our impulses, as and when they occur ? Is one way of life better than another, and should we aim at the better, or must we be content to accept life as it comes ?

Philosophy, then, is concerned with values and with the standards they imply. Most philosophers have confidently affirmed their reality. Some things, they have maintained, *really are* better than others. Some propositions are *really* true in a sense in which others are *really* false. Some things are *really* right in a sense in

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which others are wrong ; some *really* beautiful in a sense in which others are ugly ; some real in a sense in which others are only apparent. Now though philosophy may not succeed in establishing to everybody's satisfaction what things are good, true, right, beautiful, or real, although it may not tell us exactly what desires should be satisfied and what restrained, what way of life followed and what eschewed, it can, I think, manage to convince us that it is not meaningless to affirm that some things are good, true, right, beautiful, and so on, and can, therefore, succeed in investing life with a meaning, even if it is only the meaning of a quest. For, granted that there are indeed things which are beautiful, good, right, and true, we must needs feel impelled to find out what they are.

### *Aristotle on the Supreme End.*

Thus Aristotle begins his famous book on Ethics by pointing out that all actions and arts aim at an end that is good. Thus we cook food in order to eat, build ships in order to sail in them, practise medicine in order that we may be healthy. But, he points out, our ends differ in importance and all lesser ends converge on one ultimate end or Supreme Good, which should be the governing purpose of life. It is to the promotion of this that all minor ends should be subordinated. Now societies and human beings may fail either because they have no clear end, or because they pursue an inadequate end, mistaking for that which is valuable in itself something which is only a means to value. Hence Aristotle intro-

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duces his Ethics by insisting on a clear conception of the Ultimate End or Supreme Good. "Will not," he asks, "a knowledge of this Supreme Good be also of great importance for the conduct of life? Will it not better enable us to attain what is right, like archers with a target to aim at? If so, we ought to try to determine at least in outline what this Supreme Good is."

### *The Topical Relevance of Philosophy.*

Because it is concerned with the study of value or good, philosophy offers a medicine for the sickness of the age. It is not merely that the inquiries which it pursues are in themselves satisfying and noble. More important is the fact that in following them we come to see meanings which were previously denied, and to apprehend values which have hitherto been ignored.

It is difficult to conceive a greater service which could be rendered to the age. Surveying the contemporary world, one is almost tempted to say that any meaning is better than none, any values, even false ones, than the denial that values exist. For those who deny the values of life are apt to find that their lives are without value. A life without objectives, a life unregulated by principle, a life inspired by no dominating purpose, is not only a bored and a boring life, but a tired and a tiring life. Those who have a zest for living are in general those whose lives are inspired by a purpose, who are convinced of certain truths, and who conceive certain ends to be supremely worth while. In the interests of this purpose, in the service of these truths, in pursuit of these

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ends, they are prepared to make sacrifices, to forgo immediate delights, to discipline their desires, to sharpen their faculties and train their bodies. By these means they capture incidentally that which is denied to those who seek it directly, the secret of the enjoyment of living. If we are always feasting and never fasting, our feasting loses its savour ; yet there can be no motive for fasting unless there is a belief in something which makes fasting worth while. Even if the object of our endeavour is to discover ourselves, it is an object that can best be realized by losing ourselves in that which is greater than the self.

### *Plan of the Book.*

In what follows I shall be concerned to trace a number of famous philosophical arguments and to indicate the conclusions in which they issue. I shall select only those arguments and I shall indicate only those conclusions which have a bearing, direct or indirect, upon the foregoing theme, which tend, that is to say, to the establishment of values, which seek to demonstrate the presence of meaning, which suggest a guide to conduct, and which by virtue of this demonstration and this suggestion, present, in the words of my title, a philosophy for our times.

Briefly, I shall be concerned with two aspects of philosophical teaching, a critical and a constructive. In the critical chapters I shall attempt to present some of the reasons which have led philosophers to doubt the reality of the common-sense world. The bearing of this inquiry upon my general theme is as follows. Here, says the common-sense man in effect, is a world of visible, material



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things lying about in space, simple, solid, and obvious. These, then, are my standards of reality. Now these things can be bought with money. Money also buys power. Money, then, and power are my standards of value. They are, indeed, the only values that I recognize. Thus the belief about what is real leads to a corresponding belief about what is valuable.

These beliefs, reply the philosophers, are illusory and the values which are based upon them are false. I shall consider some of the reasons which philosophers have given for supposing that the common-sense world is not the independent, self-sufficient reality that it seems to be, and that our minds play a large part in its making. Some of these reasons will be derived from the philosophy of Plato who affirmed the reality of an immaterial world containing values, containing, for example, truth and beauty and justice ; some will be taken from Bishop Berkeley who, more convincingly than any other philosopher, has shown the dependence of the world which we know upon our minds ; some from Kant, who insisted that all the *knowable* qualities of the world outside us have been contributed by ourselves.

### *The Scientific Picture of the World.*

Accepting the common-sense world as the real world, scientists have built upon it the structures of chemistry and physics. For the last hundred years the common man has taken it for granted that the scientific picture of reality is accurate, has, indeed, acclaimed science as the royal pathway to truth. Now the world which science

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has so successfully investigated is the world of matter in space, and matter science has proclaimed to be made of atoms, atoms which, until recently, were hard, simple, uniform, and lumpy.

Now matter was something which one could see and touch, and since, indubitably, the scientific world of matter was real, it was assumed that whatever else was real must be of the same nature as that which one could see and touch. Hence, to inquire into the nature of the things we saw and touched, to analyse them into their elements and atoms, was to deal directly with reality : to apprehend values or to enjoy religious experience was to wander in a world of shadows. Common sense, under the influence of science, took the same view ; to use the eye of the body to view the physical world, was to acquaint oneself with what was real ; to use that of the soul to see visions was to become the victim of illusion. And the views of the universe to which the visions led had, it was urged, no objective reality. Common sense generally embodies the petrified science of fifty years ago, and most of us to-day, except on Sundays—when our belief is qualified by a conventional but intermittent admission of the reality of the spiritual—instinctively assume that only material things are real. Parallel with this belief that the real must be a substance tangible and visible was the belief that it must be subject to the laws which were observed to operate in the physical world—that it must work, in short, like a machine. As Professor Eddington puts it, nineteenth-century science was disposed, as soon as it scented a piece of mechanism, to exclaim, “ Here we are getting to bedrock. This is what things

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should resolve themselves into. This is ultimate reality." The implication was that whatever did not work like a machine—the sense of value, for example, or the feeling of moral obligation, or belief in God—was not quite real, or, even if the sense, the feeling and the belief were admitted to be real since, after all, they *really* were experienced, that the objects to which they apparently pointed were not.

To-day, the foundation for this whole way of thinking, the hard, obvious, simple lumps of matter, has disappeared. Modern matter is something infinitely attenuated and elusive ; it is a hump in space-time, a "mush" of electricity, a wave of probability undulating into nothingness ; frequently it turns out not to be matter at all but a projection of the consciousness of its perceiver.

The imaginative conception of reality no longer being limited by likeness to the things we can see or touch, there is room for wider views. Value, for example, may be real, and so may be the objects of the ethical and the religious consciousness. Hence there is now no need for those who accept the results of the physical sciences to write off, as they had once to write off, as mere illusions the promptings of the moral and the æsthetic sides of their natures, and the nineteenth-century gulf between science and religion is in a fair way to being bridged.

### *The Philosophers Object.*

I have just been engaged in sketching a picture of the world affirmed by physical science ; but the philosophers

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have never accepted the scientific world as the real one, or at any rate, as the only real one. What of poetry, they have asked, and love and the objects of the religious consciousness? Are they, too, made of atoms? To take another point, there must assuredly be some explanation of the universe; but can the atoms provide us with a reason why there should be atoms, or constitute the mind that knows that there are atoms? Clearly the scientific scheme of the universe is not a complete picture of the whole; it leaves out too much. It is at best an abstraction, at worst a figment of the mind that made the abstraction. I shall try to give some of the considerations which have led philosophers to this conclusion and indicate in particular some of the relevant arguments of the celebrated modern philosopher A. N. Whitehead.

The conclusion of the demonstration that the material world is not the only one is tantamount to a clearing of the decks, for the question now arises, if the material world is not real, or is not solely real, what is? The answer of the philosophers has broadly been that values are real and that spirit is real.

### *The Argument for Values.*

In Part II. I shall outline some of the positive arguments which philosophers have advanced in favour of the existence and reality of values. Beauty, goodness, and truth, said Plato, are not subjective figments which we have projected outside ourselves on to the canvas of a meaningless world. They exist independently of us and

are real factors in the universe. What is more, they can be apprehended by the mind of man which, in apprehending, is impelled to pursue that which it apprehends. Some parts of our soul—for example, that part which apprehends value—are more important than, and should be in control of others. For all the sides of our nature are not of equal worth, and should not, therefore, be indulged with equal abandon. Some pleasures, for example, are better than others, even if they are not more intense; some lives more worth living than others, even if they contain less pleasure. The good life consists in the achievement of a balance between the various parts of our nature—goodness itself, Aristotle added, is a mean between extremes—and is bound up with the apprehension and pursuit of values.

Turning from ethics to æsthetics, I shall sketch some of the arguments by which philosophers have sought to show that beauty is a real factor in the universe and that the degree of its presence affords the standard by which the merits of different works of art and literature can be assessed.

The admission of the existence of values has repercussions in the sphere of politics, for ethics and politics, the Greeks insisted, interlock. The State exists to establish the condition in which the citizens can pursue the good life, yet the good life is impossible of pursuit except in the State. If the good life is one which consists in the pursuit of values, the good State is that which establishes for its citizens the environment and the conditions in which, and the education by means of which the pursuit of values is rendered possible. Of the teaching of the

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Greek philosophers on the subjects of ethics and politics, I shall endeavour to give a brief account. I shall also make certain suggestions in regard to the more ultimate questions raised by the development of life through the process that we call evolution, and shall consider whether this development may be regarded as purposive. I shall, finally, hazard the view that the purpose of evolution is to refine and deepen life's consciousness of values.

### *Relevance of Religion.*

At the back of philosophy lies religion, for religion maintains that the values of which I have spoken are themselves not ultimate, but are aspects of deity. They are, indeed, for the theologian the modes under which deity manifests itself to human minds. This is not a hypothesis which can be ruled out, but its establishment belongs to theology rather than to philosophy. Many philosophers have sought to prove the existence of God, but it cannot be said that their proofs are convincing. The theologians, however, profess to *know* where the philosophers only *speculate*. A philosopher and a theologian were once engaged in controversy, in the course of which the theologian derided the philosopher for the uncertainty of his quest. "You," he said, "are like a blind man looking in a dark room for a black cat that is not there." "Very possibly," replied the philosopher, "but *you* would have found it."

To believe that one had established the existence of values or demonstrated meaning and purpose in the universe would be presumptuous. My purpose will have

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been served, if I have succeeded in showing that the questions which I have raised are not meaningless, that they are on the contrary of paramount importance, and that in seeking to answer them it is at least possible that we may convince ourselves of the existence of those standards of value with whose neglect I have charged the contemporary world.

PART I.—CRITICAL  
THE DOUBTFUL REALITY OF THE SO-CALLED  
REAL WORLD





## CHAPTER II

### THE WORLD OF COMMON SENSE. HOW FAR IS IT REAL?

#### *Meaning of the Word "Metaphysics."*

I propose to begin with some observations on Metaphysics and Epistemology. The announcement sounds as formidable as the words in which it is conveyed. Let me, then, do my best to explain. First, as to words ; by the expression, the world of common sense, used in the title of the chapter, I mean the world which in our daily life we commonly suppose to exist and to be real, that is to say, the world of living people and physical things which move about in space. Metaphysics is a word which philosophers have employed for two thousand years—in point of fact it derives from Aristotle—to indicate the inquiry into the nature of what is, the words "what is" being taken inclusively to mean literally *all that there is*. Each science studies some special and limited aspect of being. Thus physics limits itself to the study of those things that are physical ; biology to the study of those things which are living and are animals ; anthropology to the study of those animals who are human ; botany to the study of those things that are living and are plants, and so on. But there must, said Aristotle, be a more comprehensive study which, discarding limitations,

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concerns itself with the nature of *everything* that is ; that is to say, both with living things and with dead things, with material things and non-material things, with animals, vegetables, stones, pictures, thoughts, institutions, communities. The question which Metaphysics asks is broadly as follows : Is there some common quality which belongs to everything that exists, just because it *does* exist ? Is there, in other words, a common characteristic of being ? If so, what is it ?

### *Meaning of the Word "Epistemology."*

Epistemology is the inquiry into the nature, powers and limitations of knowing. How much, it asks, can we know of a world outside ourselves, and what are the channels through which knowledge comes ; through the senses, the intellect, a faculty vaguely termed intuition, or through all three ? What are the conditions which knowledge must satisfy if it is to be valid, and how is valid knowledge to be verified ? I know, for example, that  $a^2 - b^2 = (a+b)(a-b)$ , and I know, or think I know, that the pillar box at which I am looking through the window is red. But clearly I know these things in very different ways, and the way in which I verify the one piece of knowledge is obviously different from the way in which I verify the other. Indeed, it may well be asked, how do I know that the pillar box is red ? It is not easy to answer. "Is that a cow, mother ?" asks the little girl. "Yes, dear." "Why ?" The answer is far from clear ; nor is it very much easier to say how we come to know many things that in ordinary life we take for granted, and why

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we believe our knowledge to be true. It is with questions of this type that Epistemology concerns itself.

### *Relation between Metaphysics and Epistemology.*

Now metaphysical and epistemological questions are closely related. One of the conclusions at which many philosophers have arrived is that, whenever it knows something, the mind affects what it knows, affects it and endows it with at least some of its qualities. It is difficult, for example, to believe that the pink rats which the drunkard is supposed to see in *delirium tremens* are really there. It is plausible to suppose that they are at least in part the products of, or the emanations from, his brain or his mind. He sees pink rats because his brain (or his mind) is in a certain condition. Again, it is difficult to suppose that the taste of a gooseberry or the smell of a violet belong to them in the same sense in which the weight of the gooseberry or the shape of the violet belong to them. People, as we say, "taste gooseberries differently," while the faculty of smell is, it is obvious, developed in very different degrees. Thus it is extremely probable that what I taste and smell when brought into contact with the gooseberry and the violet, is different from what you taste and smell, especially if I have a cold. It is, therefore, difficult not to suppose that what I taste and smell depends to a very large extent on conditions which are present in me.\*

If we come to the conclusion that, when we make contact with the outside world, what we experience is

\* I am putting this unavoidably in question-begging language.

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determined, at least in part, by circumstances which are private to ourselves, it may well be the case that *everything* that we know is modified, at least in part, by the circumstances under which we know it. Just as we cannot tell what anything looks like when we are not there to see it (for we have not, after all, ever seen anything when we were not there to see it), so we may not have the faintest idea what the world is like when we are not knowing it. Indeed, as many philosophers have insisted, existence apart from knowledge, or existence which is not in part dependent upon knowledge, is inconceivable. Thus theories of how we know considerably affect our view of what it is that we know, and the inquiry into the nature of knowledge overlaps with the inquiry into the nature of reality. In fact the two studies, Metaphysics and Epistemology, cannot profitably be carried on independently ; nor have they been.

### *Reasons for Selection of Starting Point.*

The question may be asked—but why, after all, begin with these? My object, it may be remembered, is two-fold : first, the negative part of my task, to show that the world which common sense and science take to be independently real, and which is commonly accepted, therefore, as the standard of reality, is in fact very far from constituting such a standard ; secondly, to show that various immaterial things, for example, values such as goodness and beauty, truths such as the truth of the binomial theorem are real, and that non-sensory activities such as the spiritual activity involved in religious experience,

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or the moral activity involved in seeing and deciding to do our duty point to and perhaps reveal the existence of real factors in the universe. Granted that I am successful in showing that there are such immaterial realities, and that values such as goodness and beauty exist, I am also to try to draw a practical conclusion, that it is our duty to prefer the good to the bad, and to pursue the beautiful and eschew the ugly. I am, in other words, to seek to derive from the study of philosophical ideas certain principles of life which will provide a clue to conduct. Yet though part at least of my object is practical, I am starting with matters of pure theory. Why is this ?

*That what we think determines what we do.*

One of the conclusions upon which many philosophers have laid stress is that our beliefs in regard to practical matters are largely derived from what may be called our general philosophy of life ; since action springs from belief, it may truly be said that what we think determines what we do. For example, in the nineteenth century most people accepted the Christian view of life. The universe, they believed, was fundamentally spiritual and man, a creation of the spirit that informed it, was himself an immortal soul whose sojourn in this world was only a regrettable interlude between two phases of purely spiritual being, or a preparation for a purely spiritual condition yet to be achieved. In other words, man's true home lay elsewhere, and his main business in this life was to prepare himself to enter into his spiritual inheritance.

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The effects upon ethics and politics of this belief were profound. In ethics men laid stress on conscience and duty, and regarded the soul as a battleground on which the forces of good and evil struggled for mastery. By God's grace vouchsafed in answer to prayer, we could overcome temptation and win the victory over evil. In politics the Christian view of man as an immortal soul led to an abandonment of the Greek view that he is essentially a political being whose personality finds its fulfilment only in society, with the result that the State came to be regarded as an organization for transacting public business and establishing the conditions in which a man could freely fill his pockets by pursuing his economic interest and freely follow the dictates of his conscience by living a Christian life. To-day, owing to the decline of Christianity, the metaphysical background of these beliefs is no longer widely accepted, with the result that the private conscience is out of fashion and the State has become all-important. In the ethical sphere men no longer seek to control desire or to struggle against temptation, while in the political, the worship of the State has, over large areas of the continent, replaced the worship of God.

*Disagreements about Means become Disagreements about Ends.*

Again, in consequence of the almost universal acceptance of Christianity, the issues that in the nineteenth century divided men were not fundamental. There was a general agreement among men as to ends ; it was agreed, that is to say, that the end of human life was to achieve

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salvation, and disagreement was, accordingly, confined to questions of means. How, men wanted to know, was this universally desired end, salvation, to be realized? To-day there is no agreement about ends, and disputes which the nineteenth century was able to regard as disputes about means have themselves become disputes about ends. Thus the questions that divide Fascists from Communists, on the one hand, and Fascists and Communists from Liberal Democrats, on the other, are not questions as to the way in which a desirable condition of human society may best be realized ; they are questions as to what constitutes a desirable condition of human society. When political controversies which, in more fortunate ages, turn on questions of the right means to secure agreed ends, become controversies about ends, political life is characterized by bitterness and intolerance. It was so under the Roman Empire when Christianity was superseding the Greek ideals of life which had persisted unchanged for hundreds of years ; it was so during the wars between Catholics and Protestants in post-Renaissance Europe ; it was so during the French revolutionary era, and it is so to-day.

These few examples from the history of European civilization illustrate the way in which metaphysics and theology affect ethics and politics, and show how what men think about the fundamental nature of the universe affects their conduct as individuals and their behaviour as citizens. If, then, our object is to throw into relief against the background of the moral and political anarchy of our age some of the conclusions which philosophers have reached in regard to the right conduct of life, we



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shall be well advised to start with a preliminary survey of metaphysical and epistemological theories.

What, if anything, ought we to value? By what rules, if any, should we seek to guide our conduct? With what justification, if any, may we discipline our natures and harness our desires to the pursuit of a dominating purpose? What purposes are really worth while? By what standards are we to judge some lives to be better, some civilizations to be higher than others? These are some of our questions, and to answer them we must, I am suggesting, begin with questions more ultimate still touching the nature of reality.

### *What is the Standard of Reality?*

These more ultimate, which are also our immediate questions, really reduce themselves to one, what things are real or, to put the same question in another way, of what sort of things is the universe composed? Of physical objects, of atoms and electrons, of wishes and thoughts, of space and time, of beauty and goodness, and also, therefore, of ugliness and evil, or of all of these? Most people, I think, would answer that, of whatever else it is composed, it at least contains solid, material objects which occupy space; that these solid, material objects are made known to us by means of our senses in the experiences that we call seeing, touching and hearing; and that not only are they, so to speak, there, but that they would continue to be there, even if we were not there to experience them. Solid material things occupying space constitute, I imagine, for most people what may

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be called at once the standard and the stock type of reality. Many have maintained that they constitute the sole type of reality, and that thoughts, poems, the sense of duty and arithmetical truths, none of which is solid or material, and none of which occupies space, are not entirely and independently real. Now the first of the conclusions of philosophy to which I wish to draw attention is one which affirms this popular view to be almost certainly mistaken. So far from the popular estimation of what constitutes reality being correct, whatever else may be real, tables, chairs, walls, carpets and so forth, are, the philosophers have contended, almost certainly not real. What reasons have they produced in favour of this contention? They are both numerous and varied, and I can select only a small proportion for my summary. These I propose to divide into five main groups.

### I. PLATO'S CRITICISM OF THE SENSIBLE WORLD

#### *(a) The Relativity of Sense Qualities*

Plato was one of the first to indict the reality of the world with which we believe ourselves to make acquaintance in sense experience, and which philosophers call "the sensible world." His indictment was based broadly on two grounds. The first is derived from the relativity of sense qualities, of those qualities, that is to say, of which we are made aware in sensation, and in virtue of which we say, this is hot, cold, dry, moist, bright, dull, hard, soft and so on. In front of me is a can of water :

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is it hot or cold ? If I put my hand into it after walking in a blizzard, I shall call it hot ; if after I have been stoking in a furnace, I shall think it cool. What right, it may be asked, have I to credit it with the possession of the one quality rather than of the other ? Or consider a rabbit : is it a large animal or a small ? It depends upon the standard of comparison. Compared with an elephant it is small ; with an earwig, large. I have, it is obvious, no better ground for ascribing to it the one epithet than the other. If I am eating cheese and drinking Burgundy, the Burgundy tastes sweet, rich and delightful. If I proceed to strawberries and cream, plentifully sprinkled with sugar, the Burgundy will taste sour, thin, and disagreeable. Which set of qualities, it may be asked, *really* belong to it ? It does not seem possible to say. Look at the sea : is it blue or grey ? Seen on a calm day, under a sunny sky, blue ; on a windy day, under a cloudy sky, grey. Again we have no more right to ascribe to it the one colour than the other, for in itself it possesses neither colour. Its colour is dependent on and relative to something else, to the sky, for example, to the sun and the wind.

Reflecting upon these facts, Plato came to the conclusion that if a thing can be popularly said to possess each of two opposite qualities, according to the point of view from which it is regarded, it cannot truly be said to possess either. Things, as he put it, fluctuate between the two opposite qualities with which they are credited, between the hot and the cold, the small and the large, the sweet and the sour. Similar considerations apply to all the qualities with which the things which we ex-

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perience through our senses are commonly credited. Now we only know a thing in virtue of the qualities it exhibits. What is more, unless it *really had* qualities, it would not *really be* a thing. Therefore, since there are no qualities which a thing may be said truly to have, a thing cannot be truly real. Plato in fact maintained that physical things inhabit a semi-real world, situated, as it were, half-way between full reality and non-reality. To the account which he gave of full reality some reference will be made in a later chapter.\*

### (b) *The Continuity of Change*

Secondly, following an earlier philosopher, Heraclitus, Plato pointed out that all physical things are in a constant state of change. That this is true of animate things is obvious ; but it is equally true, though less obviously so, of inanimate ones. A stone, for example, was formed at some remote date in the past ; it will be broken down into its component units at a remote date in the future. Every moment that passes removes it further from the first condition, the condition of formation, and brings it nearer to the second, the condition of dissolution. Therefore, at every moment of its existence it is in a different condition, which is another way of saying that it is continually changing. Every manufactured thing is constantly growing older ; it is, that is to say, continuously advancing further from the moment when it was made and nearer to the moment when it will fall to pieces. Now this process of change in

\* See Chapter XII., page 297.

the thing is going on all the time, and it is going on *in all of it* all the time ; there is, that is to say, no part of it which is exempt from the process.

These obvious considerations are reinforced by modern relativity theory. According to relativity theory a thing's nature is determined no less by its temporal than by its spatial position. A thing is not only at a place, occupying, that is to say, by reason of its physical attributes, so much space ; it is also happening at a time, and in order to give a full account of its nature we must take this *time* of happening into account. But everything is continuously and successively occupying different moments of time. Therefore, it is in a condition of continuous change, being in fact not one continuing thing, but an infinite series of different things. Now if we are to know a thing, it must, Plato pointed out, remain the same thing while we are engaged in knowing it ; otherwise there would be nothing to know, or, more precisely, the thing which we started by trying to know would turn into something different before we had succeeded in knowing it. One cannot, after all, know what is merely a succession of changes. If everything is changing all the time, and changing in respect of every part of itself, there is nothing stable to form the object of knowledge. Therefore, said Plato, we can have no knowledge of the sensible world. But if a thing is real, it must be possible for us, at least, in theory, to know it. Therefore, the sensible world is not wholly real.

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### II. DIFFICULTIES IN THE CONCEPTION OF A CHANGING THING

I have represented things as being in a constant state of change, and physical things do no doubt appear to change. We are, indeed, accustomed to think of the outside world as consisting of physical things that change. But will this familiar conception of changing physical things stand investigation? A number of philosophers have insisted that it will not.

Aristotle makes a useful division of a thing's total nature into two classes or categories of being: these are respectively its form and its substance. The first, the form, consists of the sum total of the thing's attributes, qualities and characteristics. Its substance is that which possesses the attributes, qualities and characteristics; that, in short, which constitutes its individuality as a separate thing. Thus the form of a leaf in spring includes greenness as one of its salient characteristics; of the same leaf in autumn, yellowness. The form of a lump of clay may be square; when the potter moulds it into a ball, it becomes spherical. Now let us consider the leaf as it apparently changes from green to yellow, and ask ourselves the question, *what* is it precisely that changes? Not, it is clear, the substance, for it is, after all, the same leaf. If it were not, we should not be able to say of it, *this* is the leaf that was green and is now yellow; nor the form, for though we are prepared to admit in ordinary speech, when we are taking a common-sense view of things, that a green leaf may become yellow, greenness cannot, it is obvious, become yellow-

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ness. Similarly with the lump of clay. The substance does not change, for it is the same lump ; nor does the form, for squareness cannot become sphericity. All that we are entitled to say is that one form has replaced another in the same substance. What then, to repeat the question, is it, that has changed ? It is not easy to say.

*That no part of a Thing is exempt from Change.*

But this is not the only difficulty revealed by the analysis of a changing thing. When we think of a changing thing, we take it, I imagine, for granted that while a part of it changes, part of it remains the same. It is the same leaf, we assume, which passes through the conditions of being first green and then yellow. But if it is the same leaf, there must be something about it which has not changed. Thus the conception of a changing thing presupposes that behind or underneath the changes which occur in and to it, there is an unchanging core which remains the same, and is, therefore, exempt from change, since if there were no part of it that were exempt from change, then it would be in no sense the same thing ; there would, that is to say, be no *thing* that had changed ; there would have been only a succession of changes. To put the point formally, the notion of a changing thing presupposes that an unchanging substance X exhibits, first, the characteristic A and then the characteristic B. If there were no unchanging X, there would be simply one thing or one characteristic A, followed by another one, B ; there would, that is to say, be no one continuing thing to

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which changes could be attributed. Thus the notion of a changing thing, as commonly conceived, involves a persistent and unchanging core, the X, which remains the same through all the changes which occur in and to it. Now the difficulty is that no such persistent and unchanging core can be found.

### *Bergson on Change.*

The point is one which has been developed at length by the French philosopher Bergson. He considers, first, the case of consciousness. We commonly think of ourselves as beings possessing a consciousness which passes through certain well-defined phases or states, which we know as emotions, desires, moods and so forth. At first sight, indeed, consciousness appears to consist of the succession of such states, each of which is a single and independent entity, the states being strung together along something which is called the ego, like beads on a necklace. The common view thus presupposes that there is a something, a persistent ego, which remains unchanged through all the changing states and conditions that it underlies. But no such unchanging, persistent ego or core of experience can be found.

“Take,” says Bergson, “the most stable of internal states, the visual perception of a motionless object. The object may remain the same, I may look at it from the same side, at the same angle, in the same light; nevertheless, the vision I now have of it differs from that which I have just had, even if only



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because the one is an instant older than the other. My memory is there, which conveys something of the past into the present. My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration it accumulates."

If this is true of the perception of external objects, it is even truer as a description of our internal states, our desires, our emotions, our willings, and so forth. The conclusion is, in Bergson's words, that "we change without ceasing, and the state itself is nothing but change." "There is," he asserts, "no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing change at every moment : if a mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow."

It follows that there is no real difference between passing from one state to another and continuing in what is called the same state. We imagine such a difference because it is only when the continual change in any one state has become sufficiently marked to arrest our attention that we do, in fact, notice it, with the result that we assert that one state has given way to another. Thus we postulate a series of successive mental states, because our attention is forced upon them in a series of successive mental acts. It is for the same reason that we tend to regard ourselves as beings in whom something endures, in spite of change. Just as we speak of separate psychological states which succeed each other, so we speak of a self which experiences changing psychological states, and this self, we say, endures. But we have no more experience of an unchanging ego than we have of an

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unchanging psychological state : however far we push our analysis, we never reach such an unchanging ego. There is, in fact, nothing which endures through change, because there is nothing which does not change.

There is thus no self which changes : there is, indeed, nothing which changes, for in asserting the existence of that which changes we are asserting the existence of something which, from the mere fact that it is subject to change, is not itself change ; there is simply change.

As with psychological states, so with physical things. It is impossible, that is to say, to find any persistent and unchanging core in a physical thing which remains unaffected by the changes in its attributes and qualities, and it is impossible, because there literally is no part of a physical thing which does not change, and which does not change continuously as it advances in time from the moment of its beginning to the moment of its dissolution. But if there is no thing and no part of a thing that is outside this process of continuous change, the suggestion that there is somewhere an unchanging core which, as we have seen, the conception of a changing thing involves, must be abandoned ; but if there is no unchanging core, there is no changing thing.

### III. DIFFICULTIES IN THE CONCEPTION OF SUBSTANCE AND THE QUALITIES OF SUBSTANCE

The foregoing suggests a further set of arguments prejudicial to the reality of the common-sense physical thing. I have already referred to Aristotle's division of the being or nature of a thing into its form and its sub-

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stance. Aristotle's classification corresponds to another distinction which we habitually make. This is the commonly accepted distinction between the material substance of a thing and its various attributes and qualities. A halfpenny and a vase are both, we should say, made of the same substance, copper ; but this substance possesses or exhibits different qualities in the one case from those which it possesses in the other. Again, we should say that water, ice, and snow are made of the same stuff or substance, but that it displays different qualities in each of these three different forms which it assumes. Our question is, is this distinction between substance and its qualities a valid one ? Let us take as an example a highly organized substance such as a piece of chocolate and consider it in the light of this question. A chocolate is, it would be said, a substance which has a number of qualities, among which brownness, stickiness, sweetness and softness are outstanding. Let us strip away these qualities one by one. We will, first, take away the brownness ; what is left ? Something, presumably, which is sticky, sweet and soft. Let us then take away the stickiness and ask the same question as before. We now have something which is sweet and soft. But when we have taken away the sweetness and the softness, we are left with what ? Something, I suppose, which had these qualities, but has them no longer. What is this something ? It is not easy to say ; but two things may, I think, safely be affirmed in regard to it. First, it is only in so far as it has qualities, that we shall be in a position to know it. If it had no qualities, it would be unknowable. Secondly, it is only in so far as it

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has qualities that we shall be entitled to say that it exists. All physical things, for example, occupy space, and being in space entails having shape and size. If a thing had no shape and no size, if it did not occupy any space, it would not be a physical thing at all. If, therefore, we are sufficiently thorough in our stripping away of qualities, if we carry the process far enough until we have stripped away every single quality from the substance which is supposed to possess them, there will, it seems, be nothing left at all. We may, of course, if we like, insist that there must be a something to underlie, act as a foundation for, or hold together the qualities, but we cannot *ex hypothesi* have any knowledge of it, and we cannot, therefore, conceive what it would be like. It would be at best what the philosopher John Locke, who postulated the existence of just such an unknown substance, called a support "we know not what," and, he added, "it is the same everywhere." But to say that the physical world contains entities that we do not know and cannot conceive merely because of our ingrained habit of thinking that things must have an internal core or underlying substantial unity to hold their qualities together, is not to reason, but to fall a victim to prejudice. Unless we can find *reasons* for believing in substance, we have no alternative but to conclude that the so-called physical thing is just the bundle of qualities which we perceive when we look at "it," feel "it," smell "it," taste "it," and touch "it."

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### IV. DIFFICULTIES RAISED BY IDEALISM

#### *(a) That we only know Sense Qualities*

I come now to the most important of all the arguments that have been advanced against the reality of the independent physical objects which common sense postulates. These arguments form the starting point of the philosophical tradition which is known as Idealism. I will very briefly present them in the form in which they were put forward in the seventeenth century by Bishop Berkeley. Berkeley's philosophy embodies two rather different positions. The first results from a development of the arguments in regard to substance outlined in (III.) above. Berkeley begins by demolishing the unknown something which Locke had postulated as a support or substratum for the qualities that we perceive. Why, he asked in effect, postulate the existence of something which we do not and from the nature of the case cannot know? When we have experience through our senses, what we know are a number of particular qualities. And these are *all* that we know. Take, for example, my experience of a lump of sugar. When I look at it, I see a white shape. The shape I see is not a square, because a square has four sides, and I see only the top and possibly one side. When I touch it, I feel a rough surface; when I put it into my mouth, I experience a sensation of something sweet. If I grind it between my teeth, I hear a brittle, crunching noise which I may, if I please, call the sound of the sugar. Now these sense qualities, the white patch of indeterminate shape, the roughness, the sweetness,

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and the crunchiness, are all that my senses actually report to me when I try to obtain knowledge of the lump of sugar. Modern philosophers have given them the name of sense data, or *sensa*, to indicate their status as the things or entities which are immediately revealed to us in sense experience. What Berkeley maintained was that since these sense data, or sense qualities, are the *only* things that we actually experience, they are the *only* things whose existence we are entitled to assert ; we are not, that is to say, entitled to postulate some *unexperienced* substance to act as a sort of support for the qualities, something which would perform the office of glue by holding the qualities together. For, he pointed out, the qualities as given to us in experience are separate and distinct from each other. The whiteness is not rough, nor is it sweet. Thus unless we put the white something that we see into our mouth and tasted it, we should not know that "sugar" was sweet ; nor if we were blind, should we know that what tasted sweet looked white. Since, then, the one quality can be experienced without the other, it would seem to follow that the two qualities are separate. They are not two qualities of one thing ; they are, Berkeley insisted, two separately existing things. The following quotation from Berkeley summarizes this conclusion :

"That which I see is only variety of light and colours. That which I feel is hard or soft, hot or cold, rough or smooth. What similitude, what connection have those ideas with these, or how is it possible that any one should see reason to give one

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and the same name to combinations of ideas so very different, before he had experienced their co-existence ? ”

What we call a lump of sugar, then, is simply a collection of sense qualities which we have observed frequently to accompany each other.

### *(b) That the Sense Qualities are in fact Ideas in the Mind*

We have now to take a further step, which consists in the idealist's assertion that these qualities or data which we experience in sensation are not independent entities existing outside ourselves, but are literally within ourselves, being in fact sensations, or, as Berkeley calls them, ideas in our minds. The reasons for this view are exceedingly various and cannot be given in detail here.

#### *(i) Statement of Berkeley's Idealism.*

Let us consider, first, some of Berkeley's reasons. The qualities of things, as we have already seen, appear to vary with the conditions which govern the observation of them. Thus if I and a colour-blind man are both looking at a green flower, I shall see something green while he sees something blue or grey. Now a flower cannot be both green and blue at the same time, and the obvious inference is that it is neither the one nor the other, the colour seen being, if we are to believe modern physics, an effect of the way in which certain uncoloured light waves strike the eyes. Since my optical apparatus is different from that of the colour-blind man, the sen-

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sations which we experience are different sensations. Hence colours are not characteristics of things but qualities of our sensations, or, as Berkeley puts it, ideas in our minds.

If I look at a steeple from a hundred yards and then from ten yards, I shall see two different shapes and two different heights. The steeple cannot at one and the same time possess both the different shapes and both the different heights. It is, then, difficult to resist the conclusion that the shape and the height actually seen are characteristics of the experience of seeing, characteristics which depend upon and vary with the point of observation.

If I stand a yard from the fire, I feel warmth ; if I gradually approach closer to the fire, the sensation of warmth intensifies until it becomes a sensation of pain. Now the pain is in me. It seems reasonable, then, to suppose that the warmth which passed insensibly into pain was also in me. Heat, then, is not a quality of the fire ; it is a quality of my sensation.

The following argument which I take direct from one of Berkeley's Dialogues, illustrates the same point in regard to size.

“ *Philonous*. Is it your opinion, the very figure and extension which you perceive by sense, exist in the outward object or material substance ?

*Hylas*. It is.

*Phil*. Have all other animals as good grounds to think the same of the figure and extension which they see and feel ?



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*Hyl.* Without doubt, if they have any thought at all.

*Phil.* Answer me, Hylas. Think you the senses were bestowed upon all animals for their preservation and well-being in life? Or were they given to men alone for this end?

*Hyl.* I make no question but they have the same use in all other animals.

*Phil.* If so, is it not necessary they should be enabled by them to perceive their own limbs, and those bodies which are capable of harming them?

*Hyl.* Certainly.

*Phil.* A mite therefore must be supposed to see his own foot, and things equal or even less than it, as bodies of some considerable dimension; though at the same time they appear to you scarce discernible, or at best as so many visible points.

*Hyl.* I cannot deny it.

*Phil.* And to creatures less than the mite they will seem yet larger.

*Hyl.* They will.

*Phil.* Insomuch that what you can hardly discern will to another extremely minute animal appear as some huge mountain.

*Hyl.* All this I grant.

*Phil.* Can one and the same thing be at the same time in itself of different dimensions?

*Hyl.* That were absurd to imagine.

*Phil.* But from what you have laid down it follows, that both the extension by you perceived, and that perceived by the mite itself, as likewise all those

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perceived by lesser animals, are each of them the true extension of the mite's foot, that is to say, by your own principles you are led into an absurdity.

*Hyl.* There seems to be some difficulty in the point."

Take next the case of sound. Nobody, I imagine, believes that the note sounded when a trumpet is blown is of a distinct and specific loudness. It is just as loud as one hears it to be. If I am slightly deaf, what I hear will be fainter than that which is heard by a person of normal hearing. It will be fainter, too, if I am farther away, than if I am nearer the source of the sound. The inference seems to be that the sound I hear is not a fixed and definite something which exists in the world outside me. What I call a sound is nothing more nor less than my own sensation which varies in respect of its faintness or loudness, according to the conditions under which I am hearing.

The upshot of these examples, which could be multiplied indefinitely, is that what we know when we have sense experience of the external world is not something outside ourselves but something which exists in our own minds, and consists, therefore, in Berkeley's phrase, of our own ideas. Let me put this conclusion in Berkeley's own words :

"Some truths there are so near and obvious that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, viz., that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of

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the world, have not any subsistence without a mind  
—that their *being* is to be *perceived* or *known*.”

### (ii) *Reinforcement of Idealism derived from a consideration of the Machinery of Perception.*

A further set of considerations pointing to a similar conclusion may be derived from an examination of the machinery of perception. I emphasize that the conclusion is similar, similar, that is to say, but not identical, for while Berkeley contended that everything we know is in our minds, the implication of the suggestion which we are now to consider is that the essential *cause* of our knowing is an event taking place in our brains. Now it is unreasonable to suppose that the *object* of our knowing is different from the event which causes us to know; that when, for example, I feel pain as a result of having been pricked by a pin, it should not be the pinprick which causes the sensation of pain, which is what I know, but something totally different. Hence if the *cause* of our knowing is an event in the brain, it seems plausible to suppose that that which is the object of our knowing is also something which is taking place in the brain. What, then, are the reasons for the view that the cause of what is known is an event in the brain? As we at this point enter the domain of science, we will let a scientist speak for us :

“Consider,” says Sir Arthur Eddington, “how our supposed acquaintance with a lump of matter is attained. Some influence emanating from it plays

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on the extremity of a nerve starting a series of physical and chemical changes which are propagated along the nerve to a brain cell ; there a mystery happens, and an image or sensation arises in the mind which cannot purport to resemble the stimulus which excites it. Everything known about the material world must in one way or another have been inferred from these stimuli transmitted along the nerves. . . . The mind as a central receiving station reads the dots and dashes of the incoming nerve-signals. By frequent repetition of their call-signals the various transmitting stations of the outside world become familiar. We begin to feel quite a homely acquaintance with 2LO and 5XX. But a broadcasting station is not *like* its call-signal ; there is no commensurability in their natures. So, too, the chairs and tables around us, which broadcast to us incessantly those signals which affect our sight and touch cannot in their nature be like unto the signals or to the sensations which the signals awake at the end of their journey. . . . It is an astonishing feat of deciphering that we should have been able to infer an orderly scheme of natural knowledge from such indirect communication."

### *The Analysis of "Seeing."*

An example will help to illustrate. Let us suppose that I am looking at a star on a dark night. What account do astronomy and physiology give of the processes that occur ? Astronomers tell me that light waves travelling

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outwards from the star at an ascertainable velocity reach, after a calculable period, the atmosphere of the earth, where they are changed by the atmosphere into waves of a different order, in which form they impinge on the retinas of my eyes. This impact causes a disturbance of the nerves, which disturbance is conveyed along the optical cord until it reaches the brain. Here a complicated set of neural disturbances occurs as a result of which I have the sensation of seeing the star. Now during the time which is occupied by these happenings, which in the case in question may be several months, the star may have gone out of existence. Yet provided that the requisite events are taking place in my brain, I should still have the experience, which I call the sensation of seeing the star. Now one cannot see what does not exist. Therefore, whatever the object of my sensation may be, whatever it is, in other words, that causes me to say that I see the star, it cannot be the star. Just as it is unnecessary for the star to exist in order that I may have the sensation which I call seeing it, so it is unnecessary for the waves in the atmosphere to occur and the changes to take place at the surface of the retina of my eye. What is necessary is the occurrence of the latest events in the chain of causally linked physical events which precede my sensation of seeing, and these latest events are, as I have pointed out, those that occur in the brain. It seems difficult, then, not to conclude that in some sense our so-called experience of the physical world is caused by events occurring in ourselves; and if the experience is caused by, then the experience is presumably *of* events occurring in ourselves.

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### *Examples from Touch, Smell and Sound.*

Let me reinforce this conclusion by one or two examples drawn from other departments of sensation. I am, we will suppose, pressing my finger against the table, and as a result, experiencing a sensation of coolness and hardness. Is this a sensation caused by touching the table? Common sense says yes, but physics again says no. What happens, according to the physicist is that electrical repulsion is developed between the atoms composing the finger and those composing the table. The harder I press the table, the stronger are the electrical forces which repel my finger. These electrical forces set up in the nerve cells at the end of my finger a current which reaches my brain, as the result of which I experience the sensation of touching the table. In fact, however, I am not in contact with any object outside my body and if appropriate parts of my nervous system are suitably stimulated, I shall experience the same sensation of touching the table, although there is no table to touch. What is more, I can experience what appears to be a sensation of a pin prick in the non-existent finger of a hand which has been amputated, provided that the nerve terminals in my arm are suitably manipulated.

As with sight and touch, so with smell. I doubt whether even common sense assumes that the smell of a body is something which really belongs to it. Most people would probably agree that a thing's smell is at least not *in the same place* as that which is occupied by the thing. A smell is, they would say, something which a thing gives off—most people, I imagine, think of a smell

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as a sort of gas composed of molecules—and it is only when the gas reaches the place where one's nostrils are and the molecules of which it is composed stimulate the sensitive tissues inside the nostrils, that certain nervous impulses are despatched to the brain, as a result of which we have the sensation of smelling something.\* But the connection of this "something," the smell which is smelt, with the object which is thought to have originated it remains vague. Similarly with sound; waves travel through the atmosphere and impinge on the ear drums. Complex events take place in the outer, middle and inner ears. In the inner ear, for example, there is a shell-like bony receptacle, the cochlea, filled with fluid. When the vibrations of the drum and membranes in the middle ear communicate their movement to the cochlea, the fluid is agitated. The agitation of the fluid imparts a swaying motion to certain long, hair-like threads, the cilia, ranged along the inside of the cochlea. The swaying cilia send neural impulses to the brain, as a result of which we hear a sound. But if we were to ask what precisely is the nature of the event which constitutes the sound we hear and where it is, we should find it extremely difficult to answer.

### *The So-called "Underhat" Philosophy.*

All these considerations point in the same direction. What we are actually aware of when we believe ourselves to be making contact with the external world,

\* In fact, odorous substances must be dissolved in the moisture which covers the nasal mucous membrane, before they can evoke the sensation of smell.

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are not things outside ourselves, but things happening in our own bodies and brains ; or, as it is sometimes put, events taking place under our own hats. But what of our bodies, brains and hats ? Exactly the same may be said of our knowledge of them. As with other so-called physical things which appear to be out there in the world, they turn out not to be objects which we know directly, but objects which we infer as the causes of the sensations which we do know directly. We have no more right to postulate bodies and brains than we have to postulate stars and tables, the reasons that have been given for doubting that there are tables and that we know them directly being equally valid reasons for doubting that there are brains and bodies and that we know them directly.

Thus the conclusion of this set of considerations brings us back to the idealist philosophy of Berkeley with which this section started. As I have already invoked Sir Arthur Eddington to make for me the transition between science and philosophy, I will have recourse to him for a further quotation to take me back again to philosophy. Having dilated on the roundabout and inferential nature of our knowledge of so-called physical things, having shown, in particular, how our belief in the physical world is apparently based upon an inference from events happening in our nervous systems and in our brains, he concludes as follows, " Clearly, there is one kind of knowledge which cannot pass through such channels, namely, knowledge of the intrinsic nature of that which lies at the far end of the lines of communication."

This, he points out, is not a knowledge of things



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which appear to be outside ourselves inferred from the messages which they send us over the telephone lines of nervous communication ; it is knowledge of something *as it is in itself*. And this something which is known as it is in itself, the one thing we know directly as it really is, turns out to be mental ; it is in fact our own consciousness. " Mind," Sir Arthur Eddington concludes, " is the first and most direct thing in our experience ; all else is remote inference."

Eddington is thus driven to Berkeley's conclusion that the mind and its contents are the only things of whose existence we can be absolutely sure.

### V. SOME CONSIDERATIONS DERIVED FROM MODERN PHYSICS

#### *The Disappearance of Sense Qualities.*

We shall be more directly concerned with the scientist's picture of the world in the next chapter. Here, however, it will be convenient to complete our summary of the reasons which have led philosophers to doubt the independent existence of an external world peopled by the objects which common sense takes for granted, by a reference to the account which *physics* gives of these common sense objects. A significant feature of this account is that nearly all the qualities which common sense confidently assumes to belong to objects which are, as it were, out there in space, are omitted from it. Such qualities as colour, solidity, sound, smell, temperature are in the physicist's world, simply not " there."

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Take, for example, heat. A gas, we are told, consists of molecules of about a hundred-millionth of an inch across, with comparatively large spaces between them, moving about in all directions with an average speed measured in hundreds of yards a second. The molecules meet and collide, and in consequence of their collision the gas has a certain temperature. If the gas is placed in a flame or hot body, the molecules of which it is composed will gain in energy, moving rapidly and colliding more violently. Imperceptibly the temperature of the gas goes up ; heat, as we say, is generated. But the cause of this heat is the greater energy of motion of the molecules ; or, as a textbook on physics would put it, heat *is* nothing but the energy of motion of molecules.

Similarly, sound is said to be caused by, or alternatively to *be*, waves in the atmosphere. These waves vary in length, in frequency of vibration, and in mode of vibration. Variations in length determine the loudness, in frequency of vibration the pitch, and in mode of vibration the quality of the sound. Sound, then, is produced by atmospheric waves. Atmospheric waves are described as regions of pressure and rarefaction in the atmosphere moving forward with a certain velocity ; and the movement of such a region of atmosphere is the cause of, or simply *is*, sound. Thus the properties of the atmospheric waves which the sounding body gives out determine the character of the sounds which are heard.

Most significant of all is the case of colour. Modern physics deals with immense numbers of electro-magnetic waves, which, so far as their intrinsic characteristics are concerned, differ from each other only in point of speed,

wave-length and frequency. In terms of their wave lengths and frequencies they are graded in the electro-magnetic spectrum. The rays which are called "light rays" occupy only a small part of this spectrum, at one end of which are located the so-called cosmic rays, and, at the other, wireless waves whose wave-length is measured in hundreds of yards. We may express this by saying that in the scale of wave-lengths and frequencies, according to which waves are arranged in the electro-magnetic spectrum, there is a certain section of waves which are—or which have effects which are—visible ; these are called light waves.

Light, therefore, is, or is caused by, wave-lengths of frequencies falling within certain limits in the electro-magnetic spectrum. Within the section of wave-lengths which are, or which cause, light, certain subsections are ear-marked for the different colours. Thus, just as light waves constitute a section of the waves graded by the electro-magnetic spectrum, most of which are not visible, so each colour is constituted by a subsection of waves of particular frequency and wave-length falling within the light section.

But the waves in the light subsection are not themselves coloured.

If scent, sound, colour, and, we may add, texture, taste and smell, are not really "out there" in the physicist's world, what is? It is extremely difficult to say, but, as this is not a treatise on physics, the question is not one which we are under any obligation to answer.

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### *Idealist Implications of the Physicist's Analysis.*

It is sufficient, for my purpose, to emphasize the idealist implications of the considerations to which attention has been drawn. The only qualities which, it appears, physics is prepared to regard as really belonging to things in their own right are severely mathematical qualities such as number, velocity, and position in space time. They are, in other words, all of them quantitatively measurable qualities ; qualities, that is to say, which can be represented numerically in terms of more or less. Thus one weight is so many pounds heavier than another, one rate of motion so many miles per second faster, and so on. Upon the significance of this recognition by physics of measurable qualities and of measurable qualities only, I shall comment in a later chapter.\* My present concern is with the nature of the entities which are supposed to possess the qualities. These are, presumably, the atoms which consist, or consisted until recently—the modern physicist's picture of the universe changes so rapidly that it is not easy for the layman to keep abreast of the later developments—of charges of positive and negative electricity, variously arranged and variously moving ; for the protons and electrons which make up the atoms are not themselves entities which are respectively positively and negatively charged ; they simply *are* the charges. Thus if we were to ask a physicist what is really out there in the outside world, or perhaps I should say, what the things which are really out there

\* See Chapter VI., pages 130-132.

resolve themselves into when he has exhaustively analysed them, the answer would appear to be, "They resolve themselves into electricity." For the independent existence of the solidity, colour, texture, temperature, odour and noisiness which common sense supposes to characterize the things that lie out there in space, science affords no warrant whatever. If we ask the inevitable question, "Whence, then, do these apparent qualities of things arise?" the obvious answer that suggests itself is, "They arise in the human mind"; or, more precisely, "Some quality-less external stuff, which when it is brought into contact with the human mind"—I cannot say, with the human body, brain and sense organs, for these, being physical things, are presumably also analysable into the quality-less charges of electricity which physics affirms to be the ultimate constituents of matter—"causes the mind to project these qualities upon the stuff."

*Statement of Kant's Philosophy.*

The chapters of Part I. of this book are avowedly critical in their intention, and I am under no obligation here to try to put together the pieces of the picture which the preceding arguments have shattered. There is, however, a well known philosophical view which is peculiarly relevant to the particular stage in the argument which has just been reached. This is the view of Immanuel Kant, one of the most celebrated in the history of philosophy. Kant's philosophy is exceedingly abstruse, and I cannot here do more than indicate in outline the proposals which he made for meeting the difficulty which we have

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just encountered ; the difficulty, namely, of accounting for the apparent possession of sense qualities by an external world which, if the conclusion of the foregoing arguments is to be trusted, does not in its own right contain them. I will try to convey the essence of Kant's solution by means of an analogy.

Let us suppose that a human being were born with a pair of blue spectacles permanently perched upon his nose. Whatever he saw would appear to him to be blue, not because blueness was a quality belonging to the things he saw, but because to see them blue would be a condition of his seeing them at all. We might put this by saying that he imposed blueness upon everything he knew in the course of, or in the process of, or as a condition of, knowing it. Now let us suppose that every member of the race to which he belonged and everybody, therefore, with whom he conversed, were similarly accoutred at birth. Thus of a whole society of beings it would be true to say that no one of them had ever seen anything that was not blue, and no one of them could ever see anything that was not blue. And as a result they would stoutly maintain that blueness was a necessary and inalienable characteristic of everything that existed.

It was, broadly speaking, after this fashion that Kant conceived the mind to impose upon the things which it knows the qualities which we believe them to possess in their own right. What Kant chiefly had in mind were those general characteristics which every physical thing must apparently possess, if it is to *be* at all ; for example, the characteristics of being in time, and in space, of being of a certain number or quantity, of

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having certain qualities of being related in all sorts of ways to other things, of being the cause of something and the effect of something else. Now all these universal characteristics of things—and I stress the word “universal,” since we cannot imagine any physical thing to exist and not to possess them—were, in Kant’s view, imposed upon them by the mind. They were what he called “the categories.” What things were like in themselves before this process of dressing them up in mental clothes began, it was impossible to say ; for in the very act of trying to find out what they were like independently of the characteristics imposed upon them by consciousness, we should automatically be engaged in knowing them, and so in altering them ; we should know them, that is to say, as they were when the mind had already done its work upon them.\*

### *An Analogy from Chemistry.*

There is a well-known experiment in chemistry in the course of which a string is inserted into a vessel containing an apparently pure, colourless fluid. I say “apparently,” because in fact the fluid contains a number of chemicals in solution. The insertion of the string causes the chemicals to precipitate themselves in the form of crystals round the string. In just the same way the bringing of an unknown X into contact with the mind causes the mind, in Kant’s view, to precipitate round the X a deposit of latent mental constituents, the

\* Kant did in fact maintain that we had some idea of what things were like in themselves. But he held that this idea was not reached through the channels of sense experience, or by the operations of the intellect.

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categories, under the forms of which we proceed to know the X. Something no doubt existed to set the process going, something which is, as it were, given to the mind to work upon ; but since the external world as it *really* is, is, on this view, eviscerated of all the features and qualities we believe ourselves to discover in it, the world which in common sense we *take* to be real is in very truth a world which we have constructed. Thus the mind only finds in the external world what the mind has itself put there ; as Eddington graphically puts it, " the footprint on the sands of time is our own." If the colour, temperature, size, shape, and texture of things are to be regarded as the products of the mind, nature is reduced to the status of a blank something which excites the mind to activity. Thus in Professor Whitehead's phrase, " Nature gets credit which should in truth be reserved for ourselves ; the rose for its scent, the nightingale for his song, and the sun for his radiance."

Kant's view has its own difficulties, difficulties which much subsequent philosophy has devoted itself to an attempt to remove. It does, however, succeed in meeting most of the criticisms which I have brought in this chapter against the ordinary common sense conception of a world of solid things existing in space and waiting to be known by minds to which they are revealed, just as they are. If we are to make our knowledge intelligible, we must, it would seem, give up this common sense notion that the world of common sense physical things existing in space is a real world existing independently of us.



## CHAPTER III

### THE WORLD OF SCIENCE. ITS METHOD AND RESULTS

*Observation, Classification and Prediction as the Characteristics  
of Scientific Method.*

The world of common sense things whose analysis we considered in the last chapter has been ordered and systematized by science. Science in fact is organized common sense, the function of the scientist being intensively to examine the nature of common sense things with a view to finding out of what they are made, and intensively to observe them with a view to discovering how they behave. When they find a number of things which are apparently "made of" the same constituents and behave, under the same conditions, in uniformly the same way, scientists formulate what is known as a scientific law. Thus scientists formulate the law that  $H_2O$  is water ; that in a vacuum unsupported bodies fall at an equal rate ; and that the attraction between bodies varies inversely with the square of the distance between them. The advantage of formulating such laws is that the law enables one to predict the behaviour, under similar conditions, of things that are similarly constituted, even if one is not there to see them behave. Given two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen,

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then always and everywhere we can predict that water will result. Given silver and chlorine mixed in certain proportions, then always and everywhere we can predict that their compound will exhibit the properties of the substance which we know as silver chloride. Thus the fundamental features of scientific method are observation and experimentation with a view to classification and prediction. You observe and experiment upon objects in order to discover their constituents and mode of behaviour. You classify together those which have similar characteristics and similar modes of behaviour, which you formulate laws to describe. Applying the laws, you find yourself able to describe the constitution and predict the behaviour of other objects possessing the same characteristics which you have not observed. In this way you succeed in bringing the world of common sense things under the rule of law. Your object throughout is largely practical ; you systematize in order that you may predict, and formulate laws in order that you may control. Thus Watt, having observed steam raising the lid of a kettle, learned to control steam and make steam engines ; Galileo, having rolled balls down an inclined plane, learned to predict and control the movements of falling bodies.

### *What Science takes for Granted.*

Since the scientist's object is largely practical, he does not inquire more closely than is necessary for its realization into the nature of the things whose behaviour he observes and predicts. This statement may appear surprising in the light of the meticulous observation and elaborate experimentation which preceded the dis-

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covery of, let us say, the atomic constitution of matter. The suggestion of paradox may be removed, if I distinguish two different kinds of question which it is possible to ask about physical things. The first kind of question, which interests the chemist and the physicist, may be formulated as follows. Taking it for granted that things really do have the qualities which they appear to have, what do these qualities, on close analysis, reveal themselves to be? Thus heat reveals itself to be the more rapid movements of molecules; sound, the occurrence of vibrations in the atmosphere. Again taking it for granted that things do actually change and behave in the way in which they appear to do, what laws can we formulate governing the nature of these changes and the mode of their behaviour? Science, then, takes certain things for granted. It takes it for granted that things possess qualities in their own right, those, namely, which we observe in them; and it takes it for granted that things change and behave in certain observable ways. We may put this by saying that the procedure of science is conditioned by certain assumptions.

Now the philosopher questions these assumptions. As we saw in the last chapter, he questions the assumption that things do in their own right possess the qualities we attribute to them; he questions further, as we shall see in this chapter, the assumption that the world can be satisfactorily explained by saying that it consists of material things which change and behave in certain ways. Why, he wants to know, do they so change and behave? And so we come to the second class of question, which may be formulated as follows: "Why is it that the

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world whose attributes science catalogues and whose behaviour it describes is as it is?" Thus when I say that the scientist does not inquire more closely than is necessary for his practical purpose into the nature of the things whose behaviour he observes and formulates, what I mean is that it does not occur to him in his capacity as scientist to ask whether they are precisely as they appear to be, or whether he knows them precisely as they are. He takes it for granted that they are revealed to him precisely as they are by a process of direct revelation.

Similar considerations underlie the apparently paradoxical statement, that the scientist is content to observe behaviour without inquiring why things behave as they do. It is no doubt true that there is a certain sense in which science inquires into the behaviour of things with a view to finding out why they behave as they do; science endeavours, in other words, to discover causes. Why does mist cling to the ground on a fine summer morning? Because of the contact of the cold air with the hot earth which causes the moisture in the air to condense. Why does the moon appear sometimes as a circle and sometimes as a crescent? Because only one side of it is lighted by the sun, and sometimes the whole and sometimes only a part of this side is turned towards us. These are typical forms of scientific explanation, and it is obvious that in a certain sense they are explanations.

### *Types of Explanation.*

But the word "explanation" is ambiguous. You can explain something by saying *how* it happens, and you can

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also explain it by saying *why* it happens as it does. Now all scientific explanations belong to the "how" type. Explanations of the "how" type specify the cause of the phenomenon to be explained, but they do not tell us why this particular cause should be the cause of this particular phenomenon ; why, in other words, it should produce the effect that it does. They only put the phenomenon to be explained further back in point of time. An example may perhaps serve to illustrate the point.

At ten o'clock on the 15th April, when these words are being written, I notice that a dark cloud is spreading over the sky, and that at ten minutes past ten it comes down in a shower of rain. What, I want to know, is the reason for this phenomenon ? Now there is a branch of science, meteorology, whose business it is to discover the causes of changes in the weather with a view to their prediction in the future. For once the sequence, cause C followed by effect E, has been established by past observation, the meteorologist, given C, will be able to foretell E. I, accordingly, ask him, why it is that this particular cloud came down in rain ? He replies that a depression is stationed off the west coast of Ireland, and that a trough of low pressure associated therewith is moving eastwards across the British Isles. This is well enough so far as it goes, but it prompts me to ask two questions. First, why is there a depression at this moment off the west coast of Ireland ? Secondly, since I have observed that some clouds come down in rain and others do not, why is there this difference in behaviour between the two kinds of clouds ? As I am not a meteorologist

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myself, and as the one I have just invoked is hypothetical and the conversation imaginary—I have not had the temerity to approach a real meteorologist with such elementary questions ; besides, he would answer them with a string of technical terms which neither the reader nor I would understand—I can only indicate in the vaguest way the answer he might give to the first question. I will imagine him, then, to say something like this. “A set of winds was at a particular moment blowing from a comparatively warm region, when they met another set of winds blowing from a cool region. These two sets of winds on meeting one another created a kind of vacuum ; that is to say, a region of low pressure called a depression.” Or an answer might be given in terms of the effect upon a colder atmosphere of the flow of warm water, which is called the Gulf Stream. The precise terms of the answer which I am deliberately guessing do not much concern us, since, whatever form it takes, it provokes us to put another question, why were the prevailing winds blowing in that particular direction at that particular moment ? I do not profess to know what the answer to this question may be, but I suppose it would take the form of specifying certain atmospheric conditions liable to cause a current of air to blow from one region to another region. What, then, produced those conditions in the atmosphere. Answer, a certain set of conditions which were prevailing before the conditions in question arose and which caused them to arise. And what produced that earlier set of conditions ?

We can, it is obvious, push our questions further and further back, until we reach the set of conditions pre-

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vailing when this planet first came into existence as a separate astronomical body possessing an atmosphere of its own ; and no doubt, if we knew enough, we could push our inquiries further back still and specify the nature of the circumstances which led to the formation of just this particular planet possessing just this particular atmosphere.

What is the significance of the process of question and answer upon which we have been engaged ? It lies in the conclusion which it was designed to bring out, the conclusion, namely, that in order to answer our original question, we have had to replace it by another. We began by asking why it is raining now ; we ended by asking why a particular planet possessing a particular atmosphere was formed at a particular moment. At no point, it is clear, have we come within sight of a true explanation, that is, of an explanation which really does explain. We have only pushed back to an earlier point of time the phenomenon which is to be explained.

### *The Nature of Scientific Explanation.*

All scientific so-called explanations are of this type. The scientist starts with a particular given phenomenon and asks himself, why does it occur ? He answers, because of phenomenon Y which caused it. And phenomenon Y ? That was caused by phenomenon Z. Thus we travel backwards in cosmic history, at least we would do so, if our knowledge were sufficient, until we reach the hypothetical first cause from which all the rest took their rise. What is this ? We do not know. But this

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much we can say ; if it were itself an uncaused phenomenon (and being the first cause it would *ex hypothesi* be without a cause) it would be something totally unlike all the other phenomena whose causation it was invoked to explain. In fact, being itself without cause, it could not be a member of the series of caused phenomena ; but if it were not a member of the series, it is difficult to understand how it could cause them ?

We are still left with our second question, why do some clouds come down in rain and not others ? The answer to this question I do not know. Probably it would be couched in terms of a dissertation on condensation, rarefaction and atmospheric pressure.

But why, we should want to know, do the particular conditions of atmospheric pressure which I am supposing to have been specified as those which lead to rain, produce the effect which they do ? To this question I can see no answer, except the not very satisfactory one, that that is what things are like. In other words, given one kind of cloud—nimbus cloud, for example—we get rain ; given another—cirrus cloud—we do not. Once again we are left without an explanation. We are only given a slightly more complex and technical account of the fact to be explained.

### *Socrates on the Nature of True Explanation.*

But if the explanations which science offers are not in any significant sense of the word explanations at all, what is a true explanation ? What form would it take ? The hint of an answer is given in one of Plato's Dialogues,



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where Socrates recounts the history of his early philosophical speculations. The intellectual process through which he describes himself as passing is not unlike that which we have indicated in the immediately foregoing argument. Originally, he says, he turned his attention to the outside world and endeavoured to find there an explanation of the things that puzzled him. His concern was, in fact, with what we should now call physics and astronomy. Pursuing his inquiries, he studied the works of the leading philosophers of the time. To his surprise he found that they threw no light on the questions that interested him. They only explained *how* things happened, while he was interested in *why* they happened as they did. For there must, he felt, be some reason why they happened as they did, and a reason implied a mind that reasoned. Hence, when Socrates heard that a philosopher, Anaxagoras, had said that the world was ordered by a Mind or Intelligence, he was exceedingly interested and looked forward to receiving further light on this fruitful suggestion. His hope was, however, disappointed, for it turned out that the only order in the universe that Anaxagoras postulated was the kind of order appropriate to a machine in which every part was determined by every other. As for the action of Intelligence, it was limited, apparently, to giving the initial impulsion to the machine ; this done, it withdrew from the scene. Anaxagoras's Intelligence, in other words, started motion in space and thereafter the universe proceeded to function automatically like a machine.

Now whether this was or was not *the way* in which the universe worked, it threw no light at all upon the

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question why it worked as it did. If, Socrates argued, the reason why things happened as they did was that an Intelligence was ordering them, it would surely order them for the best. The reason why things are as they are must, in fact, be that it is best that they should be as they are ; or rather, that it is best that they should completely become what they were meant to be, for things do not, the fact is obvious, always realize all their potentialities. Human beings, for example, only too often, remain undeveloped with capacities untrained and energies unused. Even plants do not always completely reproduce the characteristics of their kind. Hence to say that it is best that things should be as they are, is to say that it is best that they should realize all that they have it in them to be, that they should, in fact, become completely themselves. The inference is that the explanation of things is to be found in their end—the drive to achieve what may be supposed to animate each living thing, and to constitute its unconscious purpose. Now the end is that the thing should as completely as possible become itself.

### *Nature of Teleological Explanation.*

Whether or no we accept this particular view of the purpose of a thing, it is at least clear that a true explanation is one which must involve the conception of purpose ; for a true explanation will not be content with answering the question, "How did so and so occur?" It will make at least an attempt to answer the more difficult question, "Why did it occur?"

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Now the answer to the question "Why?" entails the introduction of the conception of purpose. Why is this steam engine as it is? Because it is designed to pull trains. Why is this telephone as it is? Because it is designed to transmit voices from a distance. Why is this pump as it is? Because it is designed to produce a flow of water. Why, in fact, is any manufactured thing as it is? Because somebody planned it so, planned it in order that it might serve the purposes of the planner. The question of purpose introduces the further notion of a mind to entertain the purpose. Physical things have no purpose and can have none. They just *are*. Hence, if we are to try to explain the world, the very fact that we make the attempt seems to presuppose that the world has an explanation. But if a thing has an explanation it follows, if the foregoing argument is right, that the thing in question was planned by a mind. Explanations in terms of purpose are called teleological explanations from the Greek word *τέλος*, which means end or goal.

### *Summary and Prospect.*

The object of the foregoing chapter has been to emphasize the distinctive character of the scientific account of the universe and, if this account is treated as an *explanation* of the universe, its limitations. Now our common-sense picture of the world has been built up by science. Consequently, the suggestion that science has limitations, and that even within its own limited sphere the account which it gives of things may not contain the whole truth about them, may savour of paradox, even, to

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some minds, of bias. If something is, as people put it, "proved" by science, then most people would be prepared to accept the proof as wholly and completely true. And so it is true, subject always to the limitations and given the assumptions which condition scientific method. But it is not ultimately true, and it is not exhaustively true; not ultimately, because we can go behind it and ask the reason why; not exhaustively, because there are other kinds of truth relating to other kinds of reality with which science cannot deal. The object of the following chapter will be to elucidate this point by indicating what are in fact the limitations of scientific method and what are the assumptions upon which it is based. My object will be to show that science deals with only one kind of reality out of a variety of kinds, and that, therefore, the scientific picture of the world is based upon an abstraction. For if certain aspects of reality have been abstracted for scientific treatment and others left out, we are entitled to conclude that the world picture which results from this treatment is a picture only of certain aspects of the world. If, then, we take the scientific picture of the world as giving us ultimate and complete truth, we are falling into error, precisely because we are forgetting that something *has* been left out.

## CHAPTER IV

### THAT SCIENCE TELLS US LITTLE ABOUT SOME THINGS, AND THAT THERE ARE NO THINGS ABOUT WHICH IT TELLS US EVERYTHING

#### *Introductory.*

In this and the immediately ensuing chapters I propose to follow up the implications of Socrates's hint that science cannot provide us with "reasons why." The argument will fall into three parts. In the first I shall be concerned to implement Socrates's charge ; in the second, to draw the obvious deduction, that science cannot give a satisfactory account of the mind and must, therefore, leave mind out of its scheme of things. I shall illustrate this deduction by a brief sketch of the plan of the universe which scientists, by excluding mind, did in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries actually draw up. In the third, I shall draw the further deduction, that science cannot deal with value and, therefore, must leave value out of its scheme. These three lines of argument will all point to the same general conclusion, that the scientific world is an abstraction from the real world ; that, in consequence, there are some regions of reality which it ignores altogether ; and that of those regions with which it purports to deal

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and with which, within its limitations, it deals successfully, it does not and cannot give us a complete account ; that, in short, in the words of the title of this chapter, science tells us little about some things, and that there are no things about which it tells us everything.

### THAT SCIENCE CANNOT PROVIDE REASONS WHY

#### *The Scientific Scheme of the Universe.*

The hint dropped by Socrates has been developed in our own time by Professor A. N. Whitehead, whose philosophy has been, perhaps, more widely discussed than that of any other contemporary philosopher. Unfortunately, Whitehead is one of the most difficult writers on philosophy, and all that I can hope to do is to bring out one or two of his more salient conclusions which have a special relevance for our present argument. One of these is based upon a criticism of the scientific scheme of the universe, in so far as this scheme is taken to present us with a complete picture of *all that is*. The scientific scheme, he points out, represents the universe as consisting of pieces of matter localized in space. He describes it as follows :

“ There are bits of matter enduring self-identically in space which is otherwise empty. Each bit of matter occupies a definite limited region. Each such particle of matter has its own private qualifications—such as its shape, its motion, its mass, its colour, its scent. Some of these qualifications change,

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others are persistent. The essential relationship between bits of matter is purely spatial. Space itself is eternally unchanging, always including in itself this capacity for the relationship of bits of matter."

Now these bits of matter move about in the space in which they are located, their movements involving changes in their spatial relationships. Thus when we say that a train moves from Edinburgh to London, part of what we mean is that its spatial relations to London and Edinburgh respectively have changed ; and not only to London and Edinburgh, but also to everything else in the universe.

Not only do the pieces of matter move ; their movements can be classified and, on the basis of the classification, future movements can be predicted. Physicists formulate laws which describe these movements in terms of the operative influence of forces. For example, Newton discovered that every particle of matter attracts every other particle of matter with a force varying directly as the mass and inversely as the square of the distance between them.

### *That the Scientific Scheme Fails to Provide a Reason. Why.*

Now there are three kinds of criticism which Whitehead has brought against this scheme, each of which is in a different way a development of the contention of Socrates, that science does not provide us with " a reason why." First—and this is Whitehead's main criticism—

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the scheme does not itself provide any reason why it should be as it is. For example, the notion of force or stress as something which operates between bodies is fundamental in the scheme of Newtonian physics ; but the Newtonian scheme does not tell us *why* there should be stress, or why force *should* operate. The motions of bodies, Newton pointed out, are not arbitrary ; they are determined by certain laws—for example, by the law of gravitation. Quite so ; but though the motions are not arbitrary, the laws are. Why should there be laws operating in nature, and why should there be just these particular laws ? Our question, like Socrates's, demands an answer which really explains. What, we want to know is the true explanation of nature's laws ? Now whatever the correct answer to this question may be, it is, I think, clear that it will be one which the picture of nature as drawn by science cannot itself give. For a world of bits of matter moving about in space cannot itself contain any reasons for anything—pieces of matter, after all, are not reasons, nor do they contain them—therefore, it cannot contain the reasons why the pieces of matter move as they do. As Professor Whitehead puts it, Newton, in discovering the laws which govern the movements of matter while leaving the laws themselves as arbitrary, unexplained facts “illustrated a great philosophic truth that a dead ” (that is to say, a mindless or lifeless) “nature can give no reasons. All ultimate reasons are in terms of aim at value.” Our first criticism of the scientific scheme, then, is this : that science assumes a world of matter in motion without providing any reasons why the matter should move as it does.



*That the Scientific Scheme excludes Purpose and excludes Value.*

Our second is introduced by the last words in the quotation just given from Professor Whitehead. It is based upon the consideration to which I drew attention at the end of the last chapter, that a true explanation necessarily entails the notion of purpose; to try to explain without introducing the notion of purpose, is merely to put further back in time the phenomenon to be explained by citing some other phenomenon as its cause. This further phenomenon will, then, itself require explanation. In order not to commit ourselves to an infinite regress in which phenomenon A is explained by phenomenon B, phenomenon B by phenomenon C, and so on to infinity, we must introduce the conception of purpose by specifying what the original phenomenon is *for*. Thus, to repeat the illustration already given, we can only understand why a pump works as it does, if we know what purpose it serves by so working. Now the notion of purpose involves the notion of aim or goal, for to act purposefully, is to act with reference to a goal which the action is designed to achieve.

It may be plausibly maintained—I shall attempt the demonstration in a later chapter \*—that the only goals which are ultimate and which, being ultimate, override all the other goals—so that we can say, “Yes, I desire A, seek to achieve B, hope to realize C, and pursue D; but I desire, seek, hope for and pursue these things only because of X to which they all contribute, or to which

\* See Chapter IX., pages 198–210.

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they are all means," in which event X would qualify as an ultimate goal—are those which are conceived in terms of value. Hence, when Whitehead says that "all ultimate reasons are in terms of aim at value," what he means is that a true explanation of anything must introduce the notion of value. Now the scientific world which excludes the notion of purpose, excludes, also, as I shall try to show,\* the notion of value. Things in the world of science are neither good nor bad; they just are, and the statement that they *ought* to be different from what they are, has no meaning. Science, then, in excluding the notion of purpose and excluding, therefore, the notion of value, excludes the possibility of any true explanation of the phenomena which science studies.

*That Science makes no Provision for the Principles which  
guide Scientific Reasoning*

### (a) *Logical Principles.*

Whitehead's third criticism may be introduced by asking the question, By what methods has the body of knowledge that we call science been built up? In order to answer this question I must ask another. How does the world which science affirms come to be known? The answer is that it is known, at any rate in the first instance, through the experience which we call sense perception. The scientist is, in the first instance at least, one who observes by means of his senses and through observation collects the data which form the foundation

\* See Chapter VI., pages 129-149.

on which the body of knowledge that we call science is subsequently built up. But what of the process of building? That, presumably, has been done by the mind. It is the mind which organizes the data, devises the experiments, classifies the results, formulates the principles, and prescribes the laws of science. Now in carrying out these various activities the mind must, it is obvious, be guided by certain principles, for it is only if it reasons validly, that the results at which it arrives will be true. There must, then, be criteria by reference to which valid may be distinguished from invalid reasoning. These criteria are the principles of reasoning. Some of these principles are known as the laws of logic ; for example, the laws of deduction and induction, of which the latter in particular is in constant requisition when we are constructing a chain of scientific reasoning.

For it is not sufficient for the scientist to observe and to experiment ; he must draw inferences from the experiments he observes, in order that they may serve as a basis for those generalizations about the behaviour of things which are called scientific laws. Thus the scientist observes that a particular kettle of water boils at so many degrees Fahrenheit ; he observes another kettle boiling at the same temperature, then another. And then ? Then his mind makes a jump. What is true, he says, about the kettles that I have observed, namely, that they boiled at 212 degrees Fahrenheit, will be true of all kettles everywhere which are subjected to the same conditions, not only, that is to say, of those which I have observed, but of those which I have not, not only of those which now exist, but of those which existed in the

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past and will exist in the future ; and so he formulates the general law, water boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

The process which the scientist follows in formulating this law is an illustration of the working of the principle of induction, which may be roughly formulated as follows. Whenever the association of two things has been found in the past to produce a certain result (the association in the case in question of water and a certain degree of temperature) and no instance of their association (under similar conditions) has been observed which has not produced this result, then it is probable that the association (under similar conditions) of these two things, in unexamined cases in past and present and in all cases in the future, has produced, does produce and will produce a similar result. Further, the more frequently the association has been observed to produce the result in the past, the greater does the degree of probability become, until it approximates more and more closely to certainty, that a similar association will produce a similar result in the future.

I have inserted in brackets the words " under similar conditions " because they serve to introduce a consideration hitherto omitted, namely, that, if the conditions vary, the degree of temperature required to make water boil may also vary. Thus in high altitudes, where the pressure of air is less, water boils more rapidly, and scientists have drawn up a scale indicating the different rates of boiling at different altitudes. Now it is obvious that the preparation of such a scale involves a further and more elaborate application of the principle of induction.

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### *The Activity involved in Building up Sense-data into Physical Objects*

I have given this instance in some detail, because it serves to illustrate the fact that mental operations which are not those of sense experience, that mental activity which is not that of observation, are necessarily involved in the method and procedure of science. Whenever we go beyond the facts observed and make generalizations about facts unobserved, mental activity which is not that of sense experience is, it is obvious, involved. Innumerable other illustrations of this truth could be given. Thus I have just made use of the expression "the facts observed," implying that we do actually experience through our senses the sort of fact upon the observation of which science is built up : for example, the fact that kettles placed upon fires will in due course boil. I have assumed, then, that we do actually experience kettles and fires ; but the considerations advanced in Chapter II. render such an assumption exceedingly doubtful. When we look at the kettle, what we see is a black shape ; when we touch it we feel something hard and cool before it is put on to the fire ; something hard and warm afterwards. When we rap the kettle, we hear a metallic sound ; in other words, to revert to the language employed in Chapter II., what we actually experience through our senses is a series of qualities, sometimes called sense-data.\* We do not, that is to say, experience a single physical object, a kettle, which consists of or contains a

\* See Chapter II., page 59, for an account of the way in which this word is used.

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continuing unifying core or substance. Yet we certainly believe ourselves to see and handle kettles, and it is on the assumption that we do, that physical science has been built up. By some means, then, we have transformed the chaotic multitudinous data—the shape, the patch of colour, the felt surface, the metallic noise, and so on—with which our senses have provided us, into a continuing unified physical object. By what means? Presumably by mental activity. The mind, in other words, works up and organizes the material provided by sense experience into an orderly world of objects, and in so doing it operates in accordance with certain principles which it has not derived from sense experience, but whose truth it takes for granted.

### *(b) Mathematical Principles.*

To cite a further example: scientists are constantly making use of mathematics, for the purposes both of reaching and of expressing their results. They assume, therefore, the truth of the principles of arithmetic, of algebra, and of geometry. Whence, then, are these principles derived? Certainly not from experience. That it is not upon experience that we base our knowledge of mathematical truths will emerge from a consideration of a particular example. Let us examine our knowledge of the fact that two and two make four.

How do we come to know this fact? It is, no doubt, necessary in the first place that we should have some actual experience of concrete objects such as counters. The child learning arithmetic actually handles such

objects, and is made to realize that any pair of them when combined with any other pair of them makes four. The next stage is the realization of the truth that this fact in no way depends upon the nature of the objects counted, in order that it may be a fact ; that it is, in short, a fact not only with regard to those objects which have actually been counted, but with regard to all objects of whatever kind, both those which have been counted and those which have not. No additional number of instances is, therefore, required to establish the truth of the general proposition that two and two make four, which is seen to be independent of any of the instances by which it happens to have been illustrated. Although an instance may have been necessary to draw our attention to the general proposition, adequate consideration of this one instance establishes the general proposition with complete certainty.

What happens when we grasp the truth of a general mathematical proposition is that our minds make a jump from the actual instances in which the truth of the proposition has been verified, to the realization of the truth of all instances both verified and unverified—that is to say, to the apprehension of the general proposition itself. Now since the general proposition embraces instances which have not been experienced, our knowledge of it, entailing as it does, knowledge of unexperienced instances, cannot be based entirely upon experience. Experience of instances, though necessary to draw our attention to this piece of general knowledge, does not therefore constitute its sole ground, nor does our conviction of the truth of the general proposition, once it

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has been obtained, depend upon the instances we have examined.

*Conclusion that Nature does not provide the Principles for the Interpretation of Nature.*

The scope of the foregoing considerations could be widely extended. Their conclusion suggests that, even in the most elementary scientific process, two different forms of activity on the part of the scientist are involved. There are, first, observation of nature which provides the raw material of the process ; and, secondly, recourse to a number of principles by the aid of which the results of observation are organized and built up into the body of science. We have cited three examples of these principles : the law of induction, the principles involved in the building up of the fragmentary data provided in sense experience into substantial physical objects, and the principles of mathematics. These principles are examples of what philosophers call *a priori* knowledge ; of knowledge that is to say, which is not derived from sense experience and which is not, therefore, obtained from observation of nature. Whence, then, is it derived ? The answer to this question is controversial, and I cannot here discuss the issues involved. One thing is, however, clear. The use and application of these principles which are constantly and continuously, though unconsciously, invoked by scientists, entail the existence of a mind which apprehends the principles, adheres to them in its reasoning, and reaches by their aid results which it sees to be valid. Among these results are the conclusions of



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science. These are conclusions about the workings of nature ; yet the principles by means of which the conclusions have been reached are not themselves derived from a study of nature.

### *Summary of Argument.*

It is time to gather up the threads of the argument. I have tried to show (1) that science cannot, in the last resort, provide reasons why ; it cannot, therefore, explain the phenomena which it studies. I have tried to show (2) that a true explanation entails the notion of purpose or aim, and that science can give no account of purpose or aim. I now add (3) that science cannot itself furnish the principles which it employs and the validity of which it assumes, in order that it may reach its results. Science in fact cannot either forge or legitimize the instruments which it must use in order that it may proceed. I have quoted Professor Whitehead to the effect that " a dead nature gives no reasons " for " reasons are in terms of aim at value." A further quotation from Professor Whitehead will serve to summarize this third conclusion : " Sense perception," he points out, " does not provide the data for its own interpretation."

Now science studies nature, that is to say, the world of physical things which occupy and move about in space. To say, therefore, that science does not provide us with reasons why, with aim, with purpose, or with principles of interpretation, is to say that *nature* does not disclose reasons why, aim, purpose, or principles of interpretation.

Two conclusions emerge : the first is negative. No

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study of nature can give us the whole truth about things, and science, therefore, cannot give us the whole truth about things. The second is positive. Since explanation, purpose, and principles of interpretation all involve mind, it follows that mind must be included within our inventory of "what is" from the very start. In Chapter II. I tried to show that the activity of the mind must be presupposed from the first, if we are to account for the existence of the familiar world of so-called real things; presupposed, that is to say, not only in the obvious sense that it is in sensation that we experience so-called real things, but in the less obvious sense, that it is mind which appears to endow with substance and to clothe with qualities the objects which we experience. I now add that the activity of mind must be further presupposed to provide principles for the interpretation of the behaviour of the "real" things that we experience. Now the study and interpretation of the behaviour of the things that we experience is called science. The activity of mind, then, is entailed not only in the knowing, but also in part in the constructing of the world which science studies.

We are, it will be remembered, in this part of the book, engaged in a critical examination of the scientific picture of the world. How far, we want to know, is this world of things extended in space, which science affirms and explores, entitled to be called the real world? Since the real world must, it seems, include mind, we have now to ask, what account has science to give of mind? The answer to this question will be considered in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### THAT SCIENCE CAN GIVE NO SATISFACTORY ACCOUNT OF MIND

#### *Status of Psychology.*

The science which purports to give an account of the mind is, of course, psychology. This science is, however, in an elementary stage. It consists of a number of different doctrines propounded by rival schools, rather than of an agreed body of knowledge to which all subscribe, and most of what knowledge it obtains turns out to consist of information not about the mind, but about the body. For this undeveloped condition of psychology there is, I think, a highly significant reason, one which springs from the very nature of scientific method. In Chapter III. I described some of the essential characteristics of this method. Two are of special relevance here. The first is observation through the sense organs ; the second, the assigning of causes for phenomena in order that, given a recurrence of a similar cause, one can predict the recurrence of a similar phenomenon. Let us consider the application of these two characteristics of scientific method to the case of mind.

#### (1) *That a Mind cannot be Observed.*

First, as regards observation, a mind, it is obvious, cannot be observed. What is observed is the behaviour

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of bodies. Why, then, do I confidently assert that other people have minds? Because of an inference based upon an analogy. An example may help to elucidate the point.

You are standing, we will suppose, under an apple tree. I observe that your arm lifts itself into the air, that the fingers of your hand extend and encircle an apple. The arm is then lowered and as a result the apple is dragged from the tree. The arm is then lifted again in such a way that the apple is brought near to your mouth. This opens leaving a hole into which part of the surface of the apple disappears. When the apple is presently withdrawn some of it is missing. These and similar movements are what I observe, and they are *all* that I observe. Now, I know that I frequently act in a similar way and I know, further, that, when I do so, my actions are the results of certain events which have been going on in my mind which are, I believe, the causes of the actions. I *see* the apple ; I *want* to eat it and I accordingly decide to pluck it. When, therefore, I see another body very like mine going through the movements which I perform when I *see*, I *want* and I *decide*, I infer that they are produced by certain events which I describe as *you see*, *you want*, *you decide*, and the occurrence of these events seems to presuppose the existence of a mind in which they occur. I infer, therefore, that you have a mind and that in this mind there occurs a desire for the apple, by analogy from what goes on in my mind, when I behave as you do. Similarly, I infer a person's anger from the flushing of his face, the flashing of his eyes, the raising of his voice ; a person's love from other facial movements

which it should be unnecessary to specify ; and, if it be said that it is the words which people use which really convince me that they are angry or that they are in love, I am compelled to recognize that even words are only movements in the larynxes of the people uttering them, movements which set going waves in the atmosphere which, in due course, impinge on my ear-drums and cause me to hear sounds.

I do not wish to suggest that these inferences are consciously made. Normally they are unconscious. We unquestioningly assume, without thinking about it, one way or another, that other people's bodies are animated by minds like our own. We do not, that is to say, even realize that an assumption based upon an inference is involved. Nevertheless, there is a number of occasions when the inference *is* conscious. Thus I consciously infer that X is angry because the veins swell in his neck ; that Y is drunk because his speech is fuddled ; that Z has had a shock because he is looking pale. And the inference may in any one of these cases be mistaken. Nor do I wish to suggest that knowledge by inference based on analogy is the *only* kind of knowledge that we have of other people's minds. It may well be the case—I think that it is the case—that telepathy, that is to say, a direct communication between minds which is independent of speech or other form of bodily behaviour, occurs and is a fact. But if it is a fact, it is not one of which science can give a satisfactory account, and it is with the scientific treatment of mind that in this chapter we are concerned.

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### *The Contentions of Behaviourism.*

Now since the method of science is observation, and since we cannot observe mind, it would seem to follow that there is very little that we can ascertain about the mind by following the method of science. There is indeed a well-known school of psychology, known as the Behaviourist school, which denies, and denies for precisely this reason, that we can obtain any information about the mind. The contention of Behaviourists is that we must confine ourselves to the study of what we can observe, namely, the movements of the body, and that we must discountenance the suggestion that some hypothetical and unobserved entity, namely, the mind, plays any part in causing the movements of the body. *If* there is a mind, then, say the Behaviourists, we can know nothing about it and we must, therefore, proceed on the assumption that it has no influence whatever in causing the movements of the body. For to affirm that it causes the movements of the body, would be to imply that we did know something about it.

A body which is uninfluenced by the mind, assumes the status of an exceedingly complicated automatic machine, reacting in subtle and complex ways to the stimuli which reach it from its external environment. It is on these lines that the Behaviourist psychology seeks to give an account of human behaviour.

I mention this mode of treatment not because I agree with Behaviourism, but because I believe it to be broadly right in asserting that, if psychology is to proceed by the methods of science, it is only about the body that

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it can obtain scientifically accurate information ; only of the body that it can assert scientifically verifiable truths. But it does not, I should say, follow, as Behaviourists are apt to assume, that it is only by the methods of science that the mind can be understood. There are other methods, and in the second half of this book some of them will be indicated.

(2) *That a Scientific Treatment of Mind must be of necessity a Determinist Treatment.*

The method of science is, as we have seen, to account for a phenomenon by specifying its cause. Why does the kettle boil ? Because, science answers, of the heat of the fire. Why does water freeze ? Because of the coolness of the atmosphere. Why does a light appear in a bulb ? Because an electric current has passed down the filament. All these scientific explanations have, as I have already pointed out, one feature in common ; they explain the occurrence of a phenomenon by citing some earlier phenomenon which caused it. I gave a more detailed account of this mode of explanation in Chapter III.,\* showing how the state of the weather at any given moment is accounted for by the state of the weather at an earlier moment, which, in its turn, is attributed to the causal influence of the weather at a moment yet earlier. The implication is that the state of a thing is caused, and therefore determined, by the preceding state of some other thing or number of other things to whose causal influence the thing in question is subjected. This mode

\* See Chapter III., pages 82-84.

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of explanation can be extended indefinitely. From the standpoint of science, the state of the universe at any given moment is entirely determined by the state of the universe at the preceding moment. The standpoint of science is, therefore, determinist.

Now the most obvious illustration of determinism is to be found in the workings of a machine. It is no accident, therefore, that the standpoint of science should also be mechanist. By saying that the standpoint of science is mechanist, I mean, that the scientist must treat the universe as if it were a gigantic piece of machinery in which each event is the cause of its necessary and predictable result. If *any* compound could result from a particular combination of elements, if the same compound did not always *in fact* result from that combination, if a possible effect of placing a kettle on the fire was the freezing and not the boiling of its contents, then science as an organized body of knowledge would become impossible.

### *Inapplicability of the Scientific Method to Mind.*

How does this necessity of scientific method, the necessity to explain by reference to the determining influence of some prior occurrence which is invoked as the cause of the occurrence to be explained, bear upon the case of mind?

In trying to answer this question, we have to take note of the widespread popular presumption that the mind is, in respect of at least some part of its workings, free. Although it may be true to say that the state of a



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physical thing is completely determined by the prior state of that thing, or by the causal influence of other things, it is not *prima facie* the case that the state of a mind is completely determined by the preceding state of the same mind, or by the influences to which the mind is subjected. If freewill is a fact—and whether it is so or not, the consciousness of freewill is certainly a fact—a mind is not completely determined by anything.

The controversy as to freewill and determinism raises exceedingly difficult questions, and I cannot attempt to discuss them here.\* It is sufficient to point out that, if the mind is determined, then the arguments for thinking that it is, being the products of mental activity, are themselves determined; determined, that is to say, by the preceding state of the mind that advances them, just as the state of my blood pressure at any given moment is determined by the preceding state of my body. They are not, therefore, determined by the evidence. But if they are not determined by the evidence, there is no reason why we should pay attention to them. Hence if determinism is true, there can be no reasons for thinking it to be so. *Reasons* can only proceed from a mind which is free to consider the evidence; free, that is to say, to embrace the true and to reject the false. But whatever view we take in regard to this controversy, there is another difficulty more immediately relevant to our present inquiry which besets the attempt to apply the method of science to the mind.

\* I have discussed the issue elsewhere at length (see my *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics*, chapter vii.) and given reasons for supposing that in certain senses the mind is in fact free.

*The Two Kinds of Causation.*

The difficulty is this. There are, broadly, two kinds of causation : there is the kind of causation which I have been discussing, that is to say, causation by a prior event, or, if I may put it so, causation from behind, and there is causation from in front. The former, which is the causation of which science takes account, is as I have pointed out, chiefly illustrated by the behaviour of machines. Every movement of a machine is the result of some preceding movement either in the machine itself, or in the environment outside it. The latter is illustrated by what we call purposive behaviour in human beings. Take, for instance, the case of a man running a race. His efforts, we should say, are inspired by the thought of winning the race ; are inspired, therefore, by a goal not yet realized. In so far, therefore, as his movements are determined at all, we may say that they are determined not from behind by something past, but by the conception of an event which is still in the future. This is the type of causation to which I have already referred \* under the name of teleological, and since only minds can conceive purposes and be influenced by expectations of the future, it applies *prima facie* only to those cases in which the operations of a mind are involved. Now either of these modes of causation may be invoked to account for almost any happening we like to instance.

\* See Chapter III., pages 87, 88.

*Application of Concept of Mechanical Causation.*

Let us consider in a little more detail the case of the man running the race. What we actually observe are the rapid and continuous movements of a pair of legs. How would a scientist interpret these movements? Applying the concept of mechanical causation, he would ask himself what is the predisposing cause which induces this moving figure to agitate its lower limbs with such frequency and rapidity? The physiologist's answer would be that a set of impulses travelling along the figure's motor nervous system is producing certain contractions and expansions of his muscles. The impulses travelling along the motor nervous system would in their turn be said to be due to movements in the brain, and the movements in the brain would be thought of as responses to stimuli from the world outside, received by the brain in the shape of messages travelling to it from the sense organs.

The details of the answer could be expanded almost indefinitely, but whatever form the answer finally given assumed, it would need, if it were to qualify as a scientific explanation, to satisfy two conditions. These are, that whatever is cited as the cause of the movements of the figure must be a physical event, and that it must precede in time the movement which it causes. Now, the idea of winning the race, involving as it does a conception of something which does not as yet exist, namely, victory in this particular race, satisfies neither of these conditions; it is not physical and it is not past. It is precisely to this idea that, a teleologist would say, we must look for an explanation of why it is that the man's legs move as they

do. And since the idea involves a reference to an end which the man's activity is seeking to realize, it constitutes an illustration of the teleological mode of explanation.

*Further Examples of Teleological Causation.*

To take one more example of what is *prima facie* an obviously teleological activity, let us consider the case of a man working for an examination. Resisting the attractions of dancing, playing games, or going to the cinema, he sits at his table reading and making notes. Now it is, of course, possible to explain such behaviour mechanistically; in terms, that is to say, of some physical cause which is, as it were, pushing the student from behind into his studious activity. Possible, but difficult; for it is hard to see what precisely the pre-existing stimuli, in the light of a response to which his activity must on this view be regarded, can be. The most plausible account that we can give of what he is doing is to attribute his conduct, not to a push from behind, but to a pull from in front. What pulls him, and because it pulls him causes him to do what he does, is the examination, the thought of passing which, although it is a thought of something which does not yet exist in the physical world, nevertheless determines his present activity. To use the most applicable term, we should say that his *motive* is "to get through" his examination. Now motive implies a goal or end not yet present which the motivated activity seeks to realize. Hence, a teleological explanation is one which regards activity as being determined by goals or ends which have still to be realized. Teleological explanations, then, entail a mind.

*Why Science must omit Teleology.*

Now teleological explanations are exceedingly difficult to fit into the framework of the scientific scheme. There are, broadly speaking, two reasons why science cannot countenance them. First, science must regard the mechanical mode of explanation as ultimate and all-embracing. It must proceed on the assumption that every event is completely caused in the mechanical sense by a preceding event or set of events ; it cannot, therefore, countenance the arbitrary introduction of some non-caused factor—for example, an act of will—into the sequence of events which it seeks to explore. Secondly, it cannot accept the view that something which does not yet exist, that is to say, an end or goal whose realization lies in the future, can influence the behaviour of something that exists already ; that, in other words, what happens may not be due to the influence of a push from behind, but may be a response to a pull from in front. For these reasons science experiences difficulty in dealing with what are *prima facie* cases of teleological causation. It must either ignore them altogether, or try to bring them within the ambit of its deterministic scheme ; and since the mind is the leading figure in all such cases, since it is the mind which conceives purposes, which is apparently influenced by ambition and responds to the pull of an ideal, science must either ignore the mind, or must try to bring it, too, within the scheme of mechanical causation. How does science set about this task ? In order to answer this question I must try to give some account

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of the mind-body relationship. This in its turn will serve to introduce the mechanical conception of the universe, which is the world view in which the scientific form of explanation tends to result, when it is treated as an explanation of everything that is.

### *Mind-Body Interaction.*

Let us begin with the facts of mind-body interaction. Mind and body are continually interacting in an infinite number of different ways ; in fact mind influences body and body mind at every moment of our waking life. If I am drunk I see two lamp-posts instead of one ; if I fail to digest my supper, I have a nightmare and see blue devils ; if I smoke opium or inhale nitrous-dioxide gas I shall see rosy coloured visions and pass into a state of beatitude. These are instances of the influence of the body upon the mind. If I see a ghost my hair will stand on end ; if I am moved to anger my face will become red if I receive a sudden shock I shall go pale. These are instances of the influence of the mind upon the body. The examples just quoted are only extreme and rather obvious cases of what is going on all the time. Many thinkers indeed assert that mind and body are so intimately associated that there can be no event in the one which does not produce some corresponding event in the other, although the corresponding event, which we may call the effect of the first event, may be too small to be noticed. The interaction between mind and body is, at any rate, a fact beyond dispute. Yet when we come to reflect upon the manner of this interaction, it is exceed-

ingly difficult to see how it can occur. Mind, it is clear, must be something which is immaterial; if it were material, it would be part of the body. The contents of, or the events which happen in, the mind—that is to say, wishes, desires, thoughts, aspirations, hopes, and acts of will—are also immaterial. The body, on the other hand, is matter, and possesses the usual qualities of matter, such as size, weight, density, inertia, occupancy of space, and so forth.

Now there is no difficulty in understanding how one material thing can be influenced by another. Each possesses the same attributes of size, shape and weight, in virtue of which each can, as it were, communicate with or “get at” the other. Thus a paving stone can crush an egg because the egg belongs to the same order of being as the stone. But how can the paving stone crush a wish, or be affected by a thought? Material force and mass have no power over ideas; ideas do not exert physical force nor do they yield to mass. How then, can that which has neither size, weight, nor shape, which cannot be seen, heard or touched, and which does not occupy space, come into contact with that which has these properties?

Mind and matter seem in fact to belong to two different worlds, to partake of two different orders of being, and the problem of their interaction is the problem of the battle between the whale and the elephant raised to the  $n$ th degree of difficulty.

It is no exaggeration to say that this fundamental problem is one which all psychology must attempt to solve and which no psychology has yet satisfactorily solved.

*The Simile of the Two Clocks.*

The attempts at solution begin as early as the seventeenth century, when Descartes formulated the theory which has served as the starting point for most subsequent discussions of the subject. The newly discovered science of mechanics had shown that the movements of matter were determined and could be calculated in accordance with known laws. Now the body was a piece of matter. Therefore it seemed that the movements of the body were determined ; and, indeed, it is the case that if I and a large stone are dropped over a precipice, my behaviour will be determined by precisely the same laws as those which govern the behaviour of the stone. This result was distasteful to philosophers who wished to believe that, so far as their minds at any rate were concerned, they were free. The only way of reconciling their wishes with mechanics seemed to be to proclaim that the mind was independent of, and therefore not determined by, the movements of the body. Mind, it was insisted, was one thing, body another ; and neither could influence the other. How then account for the fact of their apparent continual interaction ? Descartes's answer \* was to the effect that mind and body proceeded, as it were, on parallel lines—parallel, because parallel lines were at that time thought not to meet and suggested, therefore, the requisite notion of non-intersection. Nevertheless, every event in the one was accompanied by a corresponding

\* More precisely it was the answer of Descartes's followers known as the Occasionalists. Descartes's own doctrine is confused and not always consistent.



event in the other. This invariable accompaniment of mental events by bodily, and bodily by mental, was not the result, as might have been supposed, of the existence of a causal relation—it was not the case that event X in the body *caused* idea Y, or vice versa—since this would have reintroduced the notion of intersection, but was due to the benevolence of the deity, who, in order that man might live and function, had so arranged matters that the feeling of hunger should be accompanied by (without causing) the movement of the hand containing food to the mouth.

A simile often invoked to illustrate this conception is that of two perfectly synchronized clocks. The tick of each is accompanied by the tick of the other, not because the one tick causes the other, but because they have been wound and set together. Similarly mind and body had been initially wound and set together by the creator, and their apparent interaction was a witness to an indefinitely repeated series of divine miracles, which secured that every event in the one was accompanied by an appropriate event in the other.

### *Materialist and Epiphenomenal Views of Mind.*

It was not to be expected that this theory, later known as psycho-physical parallelism, with its resort to a perpetually intruding *deus ex machina*, would be accepted by nineteenth-century science. Scientists were sceptical of the existence, rationalists threw doubt on the benevolence of God, and the hypothesis of continuous divine intervention was in due course abandoned. Since, if the body

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and mind are radically different, their interaction is a mystery, and, since science is impatient of mysteries, it was inferred that they could not be really different. Now, the body is undoubtedly material ; therefore the mind must, it was urged, be material too. Among the infinite permutations and combinations through which the forms of matter have passed since the universe began, matter has, it was suggested, achieved a form in which it has become conscious of itself. The consciousness of matter by itself is called mind. Mind, then, is matter of a very refined and attenuated type ; it was conceived as a sort of glow surrounding the brain rather like the halo round the head of the saint, and the function of the halo was to reflect the events which occur in the brain.

The newly acquired knowledge of the functioning of the nervous system lent support to this view. When I touch a red-hot poker, a stimulus is applied to the ends of my fingers ; this stimulus constitutes a message which travels along the nerves running up my arm and ultimately reaches the brain. Here it causes a set of disturbances among the highly complicated layers of nerves of which the brain is composed. According to the materialist theory of mind whose development I am tracing, the glow of consciousness lights up these disturbances with the result that I am said to know or to feel the heat of the poker, the knowing or feeling being what is called a mental event. From this view of the relation between brain and mind, there follows a highly important consequence. If the function of the mind is confined to lighting up or reflecting the events that occur in the brain, it cannot, it is clear, reflect what is

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not there. Hence nothing can happen in the mind unless it has first happened in the brain, that is to say, in the body, from which it follows that all mental events are preceded and caused by bodily events.

This scientific explanation of the mind-body problem has two main forms, a more and a less extreme. The more extreme takes the form of denying the existence of mind as a separate entity. Mental occurrences, on this view, are simply events in the brain to which the quality of being conscious happens to be attached. Some kinds of matter have incidentally developed among their other physical properties, the property of being conscious, just as they have developed the property of being sensitive to the light ; but in spite of possessing the attribute of consciousness, they remain pieces of matter. The other less extreme view admits the existence of consciousness as something other than and separate from the brain, but insists that its function is limited to registering the events which occur in the brain. This is known as the epiphenomenal view of consciousness. Consciousness is, on this view, treated as a by-product of the functioning of the body. It is like the bright colours one sees on the surface of an oil film when it is lit by the sun ; or of the feathers on the head of a peacock, something which is in no sense necessary to the functioning of the organism, but which normally accompanies such functioning ; accompanies it and is determined by it, for if consciousness is not an independent activity, but is only an offshoot or by-product of the body, consciousness cannot initiate anything in its own right. Nothing, then, can happen in consciousness unless something has first happened

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as its cause in the body and brain, and freewill is an illusion.

Thus in opposition to the conception which I have developed in Chapters II. and IV., a conception which represents mind as being in some sense prior to matter, the alterer and in part constructor of the world which it knows, we are now asked to think of the mind as a helpless spectator of bodily events ; it beholds them, but it can no more affect what it beholds than the audience can affect the play.

### *Consequences of the Mechanist View of Mind : The Materialist Cosmogony.*

The view that mind cannot itself determine or create anything, or, more precisely, that it exerts no causal influence on events, has certain important consequences, consequences which in their most general application constitute what is sometimes known as the materialist view of the universe. Of this view the materialist view of mind just outlined forms an integral part. The view was popular in the nineteenth century, and although few hold it in its primitive rigour to-day, it follows naturally, and many would say inevitably, upon the attempt to extend scientific method to explain all that is. In other words, it is the distinctively *scientific* view of the universe.

Broadly, the view is as follows. The universe is like a gigantic clock which functions through the automatic interaction of its parts. These parts are objects 'extended in space, and are ultimately analysable into atoms. These atoms—I am putting the view in its nineteenth century

form—are homogeneous and indestructible. Their movements are determined by the laws of mechanics and dynamics ; these laws are absolute and ultimate and all other laws are derived from them. Thus materialism explains everything in terms of the different arrangements and combinations of material particles. Little lumps of material, moving in space according to necessary and inevitable laws, have produced our hopes, our fears, the scent of the rose, the colours of the sunset, and the mystic's experience of God. They have also produced our knowledge of the little bits ; mind, in short, is merely the consciousness by the bits of themselves.

For the same laws are extended to embrace the workings of mind. All mental events are caused by preceding cerebral events ; all cerebral events are subject to the law of cause and effect, and are caused, therefore, by preceding bodily events or by external stimuli to which they are responses ; the preceding bodily events are in their turn caused either by preceding bodily events or by external stimuli. Along these lines we travel backward until we reach the first events in the history of the organism, which are the result of its initial reaction to its external environment. The organism's initial reactions are determined by its heredity, that is to say, they can be traced back to the variations from which the species to which the creature belongs took its rise. These variations are either chance happenings or they are the result of the influence of external environment. The chain of causation from some remote happening in the external world to a present thought in the mind is, therefore, complete ; at every stage the material conditions and

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precedes the vital, the bodily the mental, and we have only to learn enough about the laws of matter to be able to describe and predict any and every event that has occurred or can occur in the history of the universe.

It will be readily apparent how adversely this view reflects upon man's natural belief in the special significance of life in general, of human life in particular, and of the most important expression of human life—mind. Copernicus abolished the primacy of man's planet in the universe, Darwin abolished the primacy of man within his planet, and materialist psychology abolishes the primacy of mind within the man. To the general disparagement of the importance of life initiated by biology and psychology, the sciences of geology and astronomy powerfully contributed. Geology had enormously extended the age of the world, astronomy the size and spread of space ; there were vast epochs when it was practically certain that the earth was without life ; there were millions of other worlds in which no life was known to exist. Thus in the vast immensities of astronomical space and geological time life seemed like a tiny glow, a feeble and uncertain flicker, destined one day, when the heat of the sun had cooled to such an extent that the earth was no longer able to support life, to be ignominiously snuffed out in the one corner of the universe which had known it.

Life, then, if the materialists are right, is to be regarded not as the fundamentally significant thing in the universe in terms of which we are to interpret the rest, but as an incidental product thrown up in the haphazard course of evolution, a fortuitous development of matter by means of which matter has become conscious of itself

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It is an outside passenger travelling across a fundamentally hostile environment, a passenger, moreover, who will one day finish his journey with as little stir as once in the person of the amoeba he began it. Meanwhile in every direction the material and the brutal underlies and conditions the vital and the spiritual ; matter everywhere determines mind, mind nowhere influences matter.

### *Significance of the Materialist Cosmogony.*

I do not wish to suggest that this view is true. In fact I should maintain that it is false. Nor do I wish to be taken to imply that it is a view which is to-day held by many scientists. My contention is merely that this is the view of the universe to which scientific method, if it is not supplemented by other methods, and is treated as capable of providing us with the whole truth about everything that is, inevitably leads. It is, if I may so put it, an illustration of the sort of result that occurs, if we try to give an account of the universe without introducing the conception of mind. Yet this precisely is what every scientist must, whatever his science, try to do. The physicist cannot, as I have pointed out, admit the arbitrary intrusion of acts of *free* will to interfere with the sequence of causally linked events which he sets out to establish. Nor can the biologist acknowledge the occurrence of uncaused happenings, when he comes to analyse and interpret the behaviour of living things ; he cannot, that is to say, allow the possibility that some arbitrary non-mechanical principle of life may at any moment intrude

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itself to upset the causal sequence of stimulus and response—stimulus from without producing response in the organism exposed to the stimulus—in terms of which he endeavours to interpret the behaviour of the organisms which he studies. If, then, he is to succeed in giving a scientific account of a living organism, he must treat it as *if* it worked like a machine. Thus it is no accident that field and laboratory workers in biology are strongly mechanist in sympathy and outlook. As with biology, so with psychology. In so far as science is successful in bringing human beings within its ambit, its success depends upon its ability to treat them as highly complex mechanisms whose workings are subject to the same laws as those which are observed to hold in the rest of the world. It is the purpose of science to describe this world. Now of this world human beings are themselves a part, and the laws which science reveals as governing the events which occur in it must, if the scientific standpoint is to be maintained, be exemplified in the lives and histories of the men and women who are items in its contents. If we cannot as yet show this exemplification in detail, that, science insists, is only because of the lack of adequate scientific knowledge. Men, in other words, must be studied as mechanisms responding to stimuli, and the mind, in so far as its existence is conceded, must be studied as objectively in the speech and actions which are commonly said to spring from it, as the growth of a plant or the movements of a planet. Inevitably, then, Behaviourism is the appropriate psychology for the scientist. “The Behaviourist,” says Professor Watson, “puts the human organism in front of him and says,



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What can it do? When does it start to do these things? If it doesn't do these things by reason of its original nature, what can it be taught to do?"

### *Significance of the Argument.*

I cannot here criticize this scheme.\* Taken as an explanation of the universe it is, I think, demonstrably defective; defective, because of what it leaves out. What I am here concerned to emphasize, if it is agreed that the scheme is defective, is the limitations of scientific method which its inadequacy throws into relief.

For what the foregoing argument has, I hope, succeeded in demonstrating is the inability of science to give an exhaustive account of the world, and the error into which we, therefore, fall if we take the world which science affirms and explores to be the whole world. It is in fact, as I have already hinted, only an abstraction from the world that really is, an abstraction which inevitably leaves out of account all the factors with which science is unable to deal. The point will be developed in the next chapter; but there is one other effect of the limitations of scientific method resulting in the omission of yet another region of the universe, which has still to be considered. In this chapter I have been concerned with the effects of leaving mind out of the scientific scheme of things; in the next I shall proceed to consider the result of the omission of values.

\* I have tried to do so elsewhere. See my *Guide to Philosophy*, pages 527-539.

## CHAPTER VI

### THAT SCIENCE CAN GIVE NO SATISFACTORY ACCOUNT OF VALUES

#### *Preliminary Account of Values.*

I tried in the last chapter to show that science leaves mind out of the picture ; in this one I shall try to show that it leaves out values. It may be asked why it should be supposed that there are such things as values and, further, what precisely is meant by the word. The answers to these questions belong to the constructive part of this book and will concern us in the next two chapters. For my present purpose, it is sufficient to point out that a willingness to concede the existence of purpose in the universe entails the corollary that there must be something to serve as the goal of purpose. If we believe that events occur as the result of a pull from in front as well as of a push from behind, there must, it is obvious, be something that pulls ; or, to put it more technically, if there is teleological causation,\* then there must be ends whose presence exerts a causative influence.

And the ends must in some way pre-exist the efforts which we make to pursue them. If they do not, the efforts would be a pursuit of nothing. Thus, to revert

\* See Chapter V., pages 111-113.

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to an example given on an earlier page, if I wish to pass an examination in order to obtain a degree, I shall return home every night and read my books instead of going to the theatre or to the cinema. Now there must be some explanation of this home-returning procedure on my part, and if we accept the reality of teleological causation, we shall have to say that the explanation is to be found in the thought of the examination and the degree-taking which await me in the future. The examination and the degree-taking must, therefore, in some sense exist in order to be the object of my thought and the goal of the endeavours which I make to pass the one and to achieve the other. Nor does it meet the case to say that the degree-taking exists only as a thought in my mind, thus giving it a purely ideal or mental existence. For all thoughts are directed upon something ; I cannot, it is clear, think about nothing, and when I am thinking of taking a degree, I am certainly thinking about something ; it is certain, too, that what I think about is different from my act of thinking about it. Nobody, for example, would suppose that, when I think about a square table or a red pillar box, my act of thinking about them is square or red.

Now many philosophers have held that the ends which draw human beings (although men are very far from recognizing the fact) are four in number, and that whatever we value or pursue in life is valued or pursued not for its own sake, but for the sake of some one or other of these four ends. The ends in question are truth, goodness, beauty, and happiness. The questions raised by this assertion will be followed up in Chapter IX.

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What I here wish to consider is the provision—or rather, the lack of provision—that science makes for the values. Now whatever account we may see fit to give of values, they have, it is obvious, a very powerful effect upon human beings. Men devote their lives to the discovery of truth in science and philosophy, and sacrifice them for a cause or a creed ; they discipline their passions and mortify the flesh in the effort to achieve goodness ; they sell their souls for beauty in women, and dedicate their talents to its creation in art. As for happiness, we all—do we not?—desire to be happy, and will move heaven and earth to achieve our desire. It is clear, then, that any account of the world which purports to be comprehensive must make some provision for these grand objects of human endeavour, and for the efforts that they inspire.

### *The Scientific Account of Value.*

What place do they occupy in the world which science explores and calls real? It is not easy to say. Take, for example, the case of beauty. A scientist might perhaps point out that a particular picture constitutes a stimulus which, when it lies in the line of vision, produces reactive responses which are pleasurable in most human organisms, and add that this is what the organism means by calling the picture beautiful. Coming to goodness, he might maintain that when human beings use the word “good” in regard to conduct, what they mean and *all* that they mean is to express their approval of behaviour which conduces to their advantage. Such

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accounts have a certain plausibility, although they do not, as I shall try in Chapter VIII. to show, maintain themselves in the face of critical examination. But what account a scientist would, within the bounds of strictly scientific modes of explanation, give of truth and of the passion for achieving truth which has produced science, I do not know.

*That Science can deal only with the Measurable Aspects of Phenomena.*

The fact of the matter is that science can give no more satisfactory account of values than it can of mind. Its deficiency in this respect is due to a limitation of scientific method to which I have not hitherto referred. Science, I have argued, can only deal with what can be empirically observed and what is mechanically caused.

Science, I now add, can only deal with those aspects of things which are measurable ; its realm is, in other words, that of the more or less. When we say that A is lighter or heavier than B, we are making a statement about a quantitative and, therefore, measurable aspect of A. Similarly with temporal and spatial qualities, as, for example, when we say that one performance takes longer than another or that one place is more distant than another. But consider such qualities as ugliness or wetness. It is absurd to say that one piece of water is twice as wet as another, or that the wetness of cream is more or less wet than the wetness of milk. Wetness, then, is not a quality which can be quantitatively measured, and physics is, therefore, I am maintaining,

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incapable of giving an account of it. All that physics can tell us about wetness is that wetness is a quality of water, and that water is  $H_2O$ , that is to say, it is made up of two parts of hydrogen and one of oxygen. But neither hydrogen nor oxygen is wet. What, then, the physicist has done is to substitute for a quality of the familiar world which he cannot measure, wetness, certain quantities, those, namely, of hydrogen and oxygen, that he can. In other words he takes water, abstracts its quantitatively measurable aspects, reaches results about these aspects and ignores the rest.

Similarly colour is resolved by the physicists into longer or shorter wave-lengths in the electro-magnetic spectrum, sound into vibrations varying in frequency, vigour and character.\*

Let me cite in illustration of this contention a celebrated example given by Sir Arthur Eddington. Taking the case of an elephant sliding down a grassy hillside, he considers the account which the physicist would give of this phenomenon. The physicist wishes, we will suppose, to know how long it will take the elephant to get to the bottom. For the elephant he proceeds to read a weight of two tons, for the sloping hillside an angle of sixty

\* A word of explanation may be useful here. Let us suppose that a violin string is plucked. Then the pitch of a note is determined by the number of vibrations of the string per second ; the loudness of the note by their vigour, the farther the plucked string departs from its position of rest, the louder the sound. The character of the note, that is to say, the respect in which it differs from that of a piano is determined by the nature of the vibration. For example, if the string moves between its two extreme positions at a uniform speed, the character of the note will be different from that which is produced if the vibrating string moves like a pendulum, moves, that is to say, more slowly as the extremes are reached, and faster as it passes from them to the middle position at which it was at rest.

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degrees, for the soft, yielding turf a coefficient of friction. Replacing the natural objects given in the question, the elephant, the hillside and the turf, with these pointer readings, namely, two tons, sixty degrees and a coefficient of friction, he makes certain calculations and produces an answer in terms of seconds, that is to say, in terms of another pointer reading measured on the dial of his watch. But the answer, it is clear, is not an answer which tells us anything about the elephant or about the hillside, the objects with which the problem started, but merely about the relation between certain abstracted features of the elephant and the hillside, those features, namely, which are susceptible of exact quantitative measurement. In so far, then, as the elephant, the hillside and the rest are *real* things which are more than the sum of their weights and angles, in so far as the elephant has, for example, memories and the hillside beauty, our problem in physics has failed to tell us anything about them.

Physics, then, on Professor Eddington's view, deals with a closed world, the boundaries of which are those quantitative and measurable aspects of things which the physicist has selected as being alone amenable to treatment by his methods.

### *Impossibility of Grading Value in Terms of More or Less.*

Now if it be true that science is precluded by its very nature from dealing with the qualitative aspects of things, if it must resolve colour into waves of greater or shorter length in the electro-magnetic spectrum, sound into

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measurable vibrations in the atmosphere, then science, it is clear, cannot deal with value. There are no degrees in truth ; if a statement is true, it is true. It is neither more nor less true that 2 plus 2 equal 4, than that the battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815, or that I am now sitting writing at a desk. It might, of course, be maintained that beauty is capable of being graded in terms of more or less, on the ground that we are accustomed to affirm that one picture is more beautiful than another. But who is to say what standard of measurement is to be invoked, or by what instrument of measurement the comparisons between the pictures is to be made? We cannot take a ruler to measure the beauty of a picture, or a metronome to register that of a symphony.

To illustrate by contrast the impossibility of measuring beauty, let me take an example from a sphere in which measurement is in fact both possible and easy. Let us suppose that you and I are arguing as to the temperature of a room. We shall both guess the temperature differently, and our guesses will obviously be determined by conditions which are private to ourselves, which prevail, that is to say, in our own bodies. For example, if I have just come out of a snowstorm I shall think the temperature hotter than you will do, if you have just come out of a hot bath. But sooner or later one of us will settle the matter by getting a thermometer and measuring the temperature. The purpose of this illustration is not to suggest that pictures do not possess beauty in their own right in the same way as rooms possess temperatures in their own right ; as will appear in Chapter VIII., I think that they do. The purpose of the illustration is



simply to point to the obvious fact that though we can *measure* properties such as temperature which vary quantitatively, we cannot *measure* beauty.

And equally we cannot measure moral goodness. One man may no doubt be better than another, but no instrument for measuring his superior moral worth has yet been invented. Nor indeed could such an instrument be invented.

The point bears directly upon our present theme, which is the limitations of the scientific account of the universe. It has often been charged against the mechanistic scheme of the universe which I briefly outlined in the last chapter, that in addition to omitting God, mind and spirit, it also left out beauty and art. In the light of the distinction which has just been made between the measurable and the non-measurable aspects of things, it is possible to give rather more precision to this charge.

### *The Scientist's Account of the Hearing of a Fugue.*

Let us consider for a moment the scientific account of the production and effects of a piece of music. We will suppose that I am listening to a Bach fugue by whose grandeur my soul is moved and by whose beauty it is delighted. What account has science to give of these effects and of the processes by what they are brought about? Sometime in the eighteenth century Bach, we will suppose, conceived a musical idea. As a result a message travelled along the neural fibres running down his arm to his finger-tips; when the neural message reached his finger-tips, certain forces of electrical attrac-

tion and repulsion were set in motion between the atoms constituting the extreme ends of his finger-tips and those constituting the keys of, let us say, a harpsichord. Strings were plucked and waves travelled out into the atmosphere and impinged upon Bach's eardrums. The eardrums were caused to vibrate and the vibrations travelling through the middle ears reached the cochleas of the inner ears. Here they caused certain wave-like disturbances in the fluids contained in the cochleas, as a result of which the cilia, long hairs ranged along the inner bones of the cochleas, were swayed to and fro; the motion of the swaying cilia transmitted certain neural impulses to Bach's brain, as the result of which, or partly as the result of which, he experienced the *psychological* sensation of hearing the music. Presuming that he approved of what he heard, we may suppose him to have made a series of black marks upon white paper—the score. This procedure would again involve a whole set of complicated physical processes, some of which physiologists, neurologists and physicists would be able to analyse. The score is copied and recopied until some two hundred years afterwards somebody reads it—a complicated set of visual, neural processes being thereby involved—and plays it, thereby setting in motion electrical atomic processes similar to those indicated above, and causing a succession of sound waves to travel through the atmosphere. These, impinging upon my eardrums, stimulate the machinery of cochlea, cilia, and so forth, with the result that I in my turn experience the sensation of hearing the music.

The various processes to which I have referred could be described in much greater detail, and I have mentioned

only a few of those that are involved. To give a complete account of *all* the events which take place between the moment at which Bach conceived the musical idea and that at which I hear a Bach fugue would probably fill a volume. But of the one thing that matters, the beauty of the music, no word would have been said : nor would any account have been given of the pleasure which I experience in the hearing of it, or of why I experience that pleasure. If I say that the fugue is beautiful and that the appreciation of beauty gives pleasure, the scientist will reply, "Very likely, but I know nothing of that."

Science, moreover, is unable to suggest any reason why I *should* find the fugue beautiful. The statement of the theme of a Bach fugue consists normally of not more than a dozen notes. To strike these notes at random upon a piano is to start a chain of physical processes, of the nature and apprehension of which the physicist and the physiologist between them might give a reasonably satisfactory account. It would be satisfactory in the sense that it would include everything of importance that there was to say about them. Arrange the same notes in such a way as to form the statement of the fugue's theme, and, hearing them, you may be thrilled to ecstasy. The actual physical and physiological events that occur, the sound waves that travel through the atmosphere, the vibrations in the eardrums, are the same in both cases ; it is only their sequence which is different. The order and sequence of the physical events is, in other words, an essential ingredient in the occurrence and appreciation of beauty ; yet order and sequence are not themselves

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physical things, and no account of them, therefore, can be given in scientific terms.

### *The Scientist's Account of Poetry.*

As it is with music, so it is with the other arts. From the point of view of science, a piece of poetry consists of black marks on a white background when it is written down, and of waves in the atmosphere when it is recited. The marks can be measured and the paper subjected to chemical analysis in terms of its component molecules, whose number could, I imagine, be estimated and whose rate of movement calculated. If the poetry were recited, a scientist could no doubt give an account of the movements in the reader's larynx and of the passage of his breath along the glottis. There might also be a classification of the sounds made into voiceless and voiced sounds, which could be further sub-divided into plosive, rolled, fricated, lateral sounds, and so on. This would be followed by a description of the processes involved in the transmission of the waves in the atmosphere set going by these sounds, and of their impact upon the ear of the auditor. But of the one fact about poetry that matters, the fact that it is beautiful and moving, no account would have been given at all. Thus the difference between

“ Come away, come away, death,  
And in sad cypress let me be laid ;  
Fly away, fly away, breath ;  
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.”

and the bald statement, “ My girl has jilted me and I

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ld like to die," would have been reduced to differences between numbers and frequencies of vibrations and numbers and lengths of sound waves, or between the sizes and shapes of series of black marks on a white background.

A psychologist admittedly might attempt to give some account of the emotions evoked by Shakespeare's quatrain and explain why we experience pleasure from the hearing of it, but experience none from the bald statement. The hearing of the quatrain, he might say, produces a temporary equilibrium between our impulses and desires, so that we are for the moment freed from the solicitations of the competing emotions and passions which constitute so marked a feature of our ordinary day to day experience. In this equilibrium, he might add, lies the secret of the aesthetic effect produced by the beauty of great art \* ; art in short, produces a temporary harmony of our impulses so that, enjoying it, we are for the moment at rest. Now this account may very well be true ; at any rate, I am not here concerned to question its truth. I am only concerned to ask, how far does it do justice to the fact to be accounted for ?

For even if we were to accept this psychological account of the reason for and nature of the pleasure which the mind experiences when brought into contact with great art, we should still have been told nothing whatever about the nature of the difference between the poetic and the bald statement of the fact to which Shakespeare's quatrain referred. Our question still remains,

\* An elaboration of this account of the *effect* of art will be found in Chapter X., pages 251-260.

why does the poetic statement rouse these pleasurable emotions and produce this harmony of impulses, and why does the bald statement of the same fact fail to do so? We are not told.\* But if I were to give the obvious answer, which is that Shakespeare's expression of the fact is beautiful and the bald statement is not, I should be taking the discussion out of the domain of the measurable in which alone the competence of science runs.

*The Scientist's Account of an Old Master.*

As with music and poetry, so with pictures. It is no doubt possible to draw up an accurate chemical formula for the composition of the different kinds of paint which go to the making of a picture, while a canvas is presumably like any other physical substance susceptible of analysis in terms of its constituent atoms and electrons. The chemical formula and the physical analysis taken together constitute, I suppose, what may be called the scientific account of the picture; they are what science has to tell us about it and *all* that science has to tell us about it.

Now this scientific account would be couched in similar terms whether the picture were a good one or a bad one; the account would, that is to say, be similar for a Cézanne and for the illuminated text on the wall of a lodging-house bedroom. The measure of its similarity is also the measure of its deficiency. It

\* Nor, of course, *can* we be told on scientific lines, for, as I have argued in a previous chapter (see pages 81-89) *complete* explanations are not within the competence of science to give.

is deficient because it leaves out the only thing that matters, namely, that one picture is beautiful and the other is not. If chemical formulae and physical analyses constituted the sole truth about pictures, if they constituted even the most important part of the truth about them, there would be no art criticism, no picture galleries, no Latin quarter, and no delighted young people thrilling with intense pleasure as they make acquaintance for the first time with the beauty which is manifested in pictorial art. Let me once more point the moral : the defectiveness of these scientific accounts of poetry and of pictures, springs from the characteristic of scientific method which we have already noted, which is that science can deal only with those qualities which are capable of quantitative measurement ; now the value of pictures and poetry is not measurable.

*That Science classifies on the Basis of Common Qualities.*

There is a further reason why the peculiar character of scientific method precludes the sciences from telling us anything of value about the nature of works of art. Science, as I have tried on a previous page to show, proceeds by means of classification made in the interests of prediction. Its method is to assemble things together in classified groups whose characteristics are known, in order that when, on a subsequent occasion, a phenomenon occurs which appears to belong to one such classified group, its nature may be described and its behaviour predicted from our general knowledge of the characteristics of members of the group. All X's, says the scientist,

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have such and such characteristics and behave in such and such ways ; for example, they lay five eggs, which are blue and speckled with brown spots, and desert the nest if disturbed more than three times. This bird is an X. Therefore, we can tell without further examination that it will lay five eggs which will be blue with brown spots, and will desert after three disturbances. Now it is in virtue of the features which things possess in common that they are classifiable. Hence in order that science may classify phenomena into groups, it concentrates upon their common features and treats all the things that it assigns to the group that it has established by virtue of the fact that they do possess common features, as if they were the same. Thus to revert to the instance I have cited, blackbirds may be scheduled as birds laying five eggs and deserting after three disturbances of the nest.

*That Everything is Unique and therefore different from Everything else.*

Now there is a perfectly obvious sense in which nothing is the same as anything else. If it were the same in every respect, then there would not be two things, but one thing. Merely, then, in virtue of the fact that they are two and not one, any two things must be numerically different. But in addition to this obvious sense in which it is different, everything possesses a certain individuality in respect of which it is unique ; it is, that is to say, itself and, by virtue of being itself, it is "not that other." This is obviously true of living creatures, but it is equally



true of plants—no one bluebell, for example, is *exactly* like any other—and of inanimate things ; even two mass-produced ties, caramels or tins will exhibit minute differences.

Now these minute differences, in which the uniqueness of a thing consists, science ignores. If, for example, the scientist is asked to give an account of two dozen balls of varying shades of grey, ranging from black to white, he will start to classify them into groups. The procedure of classifying into groups means that all the balls falling into the same group are treated *as if* they were of the same colour. And so, approximately, they are ; approximately, but not precisely, for *ex hypothesi* every ball is of a different shade. Instead, then, of twenty-four balls, each of them possessing a different and unique shade of grey, the scientist will present us with a number of different groups of balls, all the balls in each group being regarded *as if* they were identically coloured, and each group being separated by a clear-cut line of demarcation from the next. This procedure the scientist adopts, and must of necessity adopt, because he is interested in the classifiable, and therefore in the common, features of things.

The artist, on the other hand, is mainly interested in the differences between things. Thus the painter seeks to comprehend, to catch, and to reproduce the unique individuality of the things which he paints. He is interested not in the features which this tea-cup possess in common with all other tea-cups, but in the individual uniqueness of this particular cup. It is this uniqueness which, however imperfectly, the good painter succeeds

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in rendering. The cup, as he paints it, could not have been so painted by anybody else because his picture conveys his individual vision of the uniqueness of that which he paints. In this respect also science shows itself to be incapable of giving an adequate account of the sphere of reality in which the artist moves ; and in this respect also science abstracts from the totality of that which is presented to it those aspects, and only those aspects, with which it is competent to deal. Now art is a genuine activity of the human spirit, and the object which the artist presents to us is certainly not less real than the objects with which the scientist deals. The point can be put in either of two ways. We can say that science abstracts in one way, abstracts, that is to say, those features, which are common and measurable, and art in another ; or, more radically, that while science abstracts the common and measurable qualities of real things, art seeks to present or to convey the element of individuality in virtue of which they are unique.

*That Science takes whole Things to Pieces and describes them  
in Terms of their Pieces.*

I will take one further example of the limitations of the scientific treatment of reality. Science, I am affirming, confines itself to the measurable aspects and common qualities of the things with which it deals. In so far as the measurable aspects and common qualities of the thing dealt with are comparatively unimportant, science fails by consequence to give us information of importance about it. Now one of the " things " whose common and

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measurable aspects are comparatively unimportant is a human being, or more precisely, a human personality. What account, then, does science give of human personality ?

Before I answer this question, I must say something about another relevant characteristic of scientific method. Not only does science concentrate on common qualities and measurable aspects, it also takes to pieces. "How does it work ?" asks the schoolboy, when presented with a new steam engine ; and in order to find out how it works, he takes it to pieces in the hope (not always fulfilled) of presently putting it together again. Now the steam engine is an assemblage of parts which may properly be described as their sum ; and in so far as a whole is the sum of its parts, the scientist's procedure is legitimate. For if a whole may be accurately described as the sum of its parts, a complete account of the parts will, it is obvious, be a complete account of the whole. But suppose that there are some wholes which are more than the sums of their separate parts ?

*Wholes which are more than the Sums of their Parts.*

Consider, for example, the case of a picture. As I have just pointed out, a picture, in common with any other physical thing, can be analysed into its component parts. It can be split up into the various figures and objects which it represents ; it can also be reduced to its constituent atoms and electrons. Here, for example, is a picture of a woman with a white ruff and a red and purple dress posed against a blue-green background of

hills and trees, and holding a pink-coloured baby. Let us try to think of this picture simply as a representation of a number of assembled objects. From this point of view, the subtraction of one mass of coloured paint from the sum-total of the paints collected together upon the area of the canvas makes a purely arithmetical difference. There is just so much less paint of that particular colour. But this, it is obvious, is not the point of view that matters. From the point of view that matters—that is to say, from the point of view which regards the picture as an object of aesthetic interest and value—the subtraction destroys most of the interest and most of the value ; and it does this because it destroys a whole.

Similar considerations apply to the case of a movement of a symphony. When we say that the movement is a whole or a unit, what do we mean ? That, if one of its phrases were taken away, there would be left not merely the movement minus the particular phrase, but a mere succession of musical sounds whose aesthetic value had evaporated, simply because their pattern had been destroyed. An aesthetic whole, in other words, is not only the sum of its parts, but is something more than their sum, and this “ more,” though it is dependent on the assemblage of the parts for its physical existence, cannot itself be adequately described in terms of them. The whole, in fact, is a something added, like the bloom on a rose or the flush on the cheek of perfect health. Yet just because it is dependent on the parts for its existence, the subtraction of any one of the parts destroys the aesthetic whole.

Now consider the parts ; consider, in particular, the

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phrase which we have conceived to be taken from the symphony. If it is played in isolation, its effect upon the hearer is different from that which it made when it occurred as an integral part of the developing movement of the symphony ; different and less important, less significant.

### *A Formula for a Human Being.*

Let us now extend our consideration to the whole which is a human being ; for a human being also may be regarded as a collection of parts. There is, for example, a celebrated prescription for the constituents of a human body, quoted by Mr. B. A. Howard in his book *The Proper Study of Mankind* :

Enough water to fill a ten-gallon barrel ;  
enough fat for seven bars of soap ;  
carbon for 9,000 lead pencils ;  
phosphorus for 2,200 match-heads ;  
iron for one medium-sized nail ;  
lime enough to whitewash a chicken coop ; and  
small quantities of magnesium and sulphur.

Take these ingredients, combine them in the right proportions in the right way and the result, apparently, is a man. This, at least, is *one* of the things that a man is. There is, in other words, a scientific formula for the production of human bodies as there is for the production of any other commodity. And, if it be objected that the formula applies only to the body, and that the mind has been left out of the recipe, we have only to go to the biologists and geneticists for information as to genus,

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species, race, initial inheritance, and distribution of chromosomes and genes, and to the psychologists for a statement of inherited disposition, temperament, mental structure and unconscious complexes, and the mind and character can be brought within the bounds of the formula. Now just as, if you know the formula for the ingredients of a chemical compound, you know how the compound will behave in such and such conditions, so, from the standpoint of science, if you know the formula for the ingredients of a man's bodily and mental constitution, you can tell how a human being will behave in such and such circumstances ; for, directly you take it to pieces and examine the parts, each part as we have seen appears to be completely determined by the others. The human being, then, as science conceives him, is a determined function of the constituents of his body and mind.

### *The Scientific Account of a Personality.*

Now of these various parts the different sciences have much to tell us. Indeed, each separate aspect of a human being is assigned to a special science, and of this aspect the relevant science purports to give a reasonably full account. We will suppose that these various accounts are drawn up and collated. We will imagine ourselves to begin with the physiological account in terms of tubes and pipes, nerves and bones and blood vessels. These, presumably, can be analysed into their chemical compounds, and there will be, therefore, a chemical account in terms of molecules and elements. These, again, can

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be analysed in terms of their atomic constituents and to the chemist's, therefore, we must add the physicist's account in terms of protons and electrons. Beginning at the other end of the scale, we shall have to include the psychologist's account in terms of mental events, images, sensations and so forth, with special departmental accounts such as the behaviourist's in terms of language habits and conditioned reflexes, and the psycho-analyst's in terms of unconscious desire and promptings of the libido. From other points of view there is the economic man and there is the median man of the statistician ; there is man from the standpoint of the biologist and man as he appears to the anthropologist. Each of these accounts could in theory be made accurate and complete—complete, that is to say, so far as it goes ; yet each would be couched in different terms. To say that no one of these accounts conveys the whole truth about a man, but describes only some particular aspect of him which has been selected for special attention, would be to state a commonplace.

### *That a Man's Personality eludes Scientific Description.*

But we can go further. Let us suppose that all the different accounts, the physiological, the chemical, the physical, the psychological, the behaviouristic, the psycho-analytic, the economic, the statistical, the biological, and the anthropological were collated, supplemented with other accurate but partial accounts and worked up into a comprehensive survey ; they would still fail to constitute *the* truth about a man. And they

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would fail to do this, not because some particular piece of information had been left out, or some particular point of view forgotten—for no matter how complete the collection of scientific accounts might be, the truth would still elude them—but because they would remain only a set of separate accounts of different parts or aspects, and a man is more than the different parts or aspects which are ingredients of him. True knowledge of a man is not, in other words, the sum-total of the complete and accurate accounts of all his different aspects, even if those accounts could be made exhaustive. True knowledge is, or at least includes, knowledge of the man as a whole. To know a man as a whole is to know him as a personality, for a personality is the whole which, while it integrates all the parts and so includes them within itself, is, nevertheless, something over and above their sum. Now to know a man as a personality, is to know him in a manner of which science takes no cognizance. It is to know him as a friend.

The conclusion is that in the degree to which a man may be considered to be more than the sum of his parts or aspects, science is disabled from giving a full and complete account of him. If, then, we are agreed that he may rightly be so considered, we shall refuse to treat the scientific account of him, which takes him to pieces and then represents him as the resultant sum of the pieces, as exhaustive. There is always, we shall insist, some factor in a human being which escapes through the meshes of the scientific net, and this is precisely the factor in respect of which he is more than the sum of the parts or aspects which the sciences study.



*That an Abstraction never contains the Whole Truth.*

The intention of these various examples has been to emphasize the point that the scientific picture of the world is a partial one. In the preceding two chapters I pointed out that science cannot provide us with an *explanation* of the phenomena that it explores, and that it cannot give an account of mind. In this one I have argued that it cannot provide us with an explanation of value and that it cannot, therefore, give an account of art. The reason for these various inabilities is fundamentally the same reason. It is that the scientific picture of the universe is an abstraction ; it is a picture which includes certain aspects of things, those, namely, with which scientific method is capable of dealing, and which leaves out the rest. Sometimes, as in the case of a plant, for example, or a crystal, these aspects are those which are important and the scientific account is, therefore, valuable ; sometimes, as in the case of a personality they are unimportant, and the value of the scientific account is, accordingly, negligible. If, then, in cases of this second kind we take the scientific account as constituting a complete account, as constituting, that is to say, the whole truth, we fall into error. For when we say of an account, that is an abstraction, one of the things we mean is that something has been left out. Science, then, omits part of the truth. The omission does not matter, so long as we do not fall into the error of supposing that the truth of the abstraction is the whole truth. A photograph is a representation of a human

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being, but it is a representation which is also an abstraction ; it concentrates on certain aspects, height, for example, width, and spatial relations, and leaves out certain others such as colouring and solidity. For even the best photograph is a monochrome in two dimensions, while a human being is multi-coloured and occupies three dimensions. If, therefore, we were to accept a photograph of a human being whom we had never seen as constituting a full and exhaustive representation of him, we should be deliberately ignoring a part of the truth.

Similarly, to regard reality as science represents it to us, as being, that is to say, composed of physical things which move about in space, is to ignore part of the truth ; and the part of the truth that is ignored is of the greatest importance. It includes, as I have tried to show, principles of explanation, mind and value. To say that the scientific account of the universe is inadequate because it makes no provision for them, is to say that they ought to be provided for. If they ought to be provided for, they must exist. Therefore, whether pieces of matter extended in space are or are not real—and reasons for doubting their independent reality were given in the second chapter—mind and values are certainly real. The experience which we enjoy when we read poetry is just as real and just as significant as the experience which we suffer when we sit on a pin ; and just as there is a pin to cause the pain, so there must be something to cause our aesthetic delight in the poem, a something which is not adequately described as a series of black marks on a white background. What account, then, are

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we to give of this something? The answer belongs to the second, and, I hope, constructive, part of this book.

### SUMMARY AND RECAPITULATION

In Part I. my object has been to take the currently accepted standard of reality which in ordinary daily life we habitually invoke, and to subject it to critical examination. The standard in question is that which is set for us by our unhesitating acceptance of the reality of physical things and living creatures. It is generally held that the reality of this world of things and creatures which is accepted by common sense has been substantiated by science. I have tried to show that this standard of reality is inadequate. Whether or no the world which common sense affirms and science explores is or is not independently real—and in Chapter II. I gave reasons for supposing that it may not be—it does not *exhaust* reality. Other things, then, are also real. In Part II. I shall endeavour to indicate what some of these other things are. If I am right in supposing that there are realms of reality other than and additional to those which science explores, it is not by following the method of science that we shall discover them. For the method of science, as I have just argued, is “abstractive”; it leaves out of account that with which it cannot deal, and it also leaves out the explanation of that with which it does deal. It is no use, therefore, asking an astronomer to tell us about God, as if the possession of a powerful telescope would enable us to catch a glimpse of the kingdom of Heaven, just as it is no use asking a physicist to tell us

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about pictures, as if the possession of a powerful microscope would reveal to us the element of beauty which they contain. We must not, then, ask of science what it cannot give us. If the world has any sense, if it has any explanation, then it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that some part of the explanation may be comprehended by the human mind. But to look for it in the physical world by the methods of science, is as if a man holding in his hand a message which puzzled him set out to find its meaning by subjecting to chemical analysis the ink and the paper on which the message was written.

Again, if the world has a purpose, it is reasonable to suppose that we may catch a glimpse of it not in the origins and beginnings of things, but in their fullest development. We must, therefore, adopt what I have called above \* teleological modes of explanation, interpreting in terms of aims rather than of origins, and judging life by its fruits rather than by its roots. From this standpoint we may see opening before us roads for the understanding of reality other than those which lie through the microscope and the test tube. Upon some of these we shall venture to set foot in the second part of this book. If it should turn out that values are real, that some things, that is to say, are really good and some things really bad, some things really beautiful and some things really ugly, if, further, it should turn out that existence has a purpose, then it may well be our duty to pursue the good, to prefer the beautiful and to further the purpose, and the life of modern man which, in the contemporary decline of religious belief, is only too often

\* See Chapter III., page 87-88.

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a chaos of conflicting impulses and desires expressed in a succession of meaningless happenings, may in terms of value and purpose be seen to have a meaning. Finally, if life has a meaning it will follow that it is our duty to live it in a certain way. Thus our theoretical speculations about life may provide, as they have done before in the history of philosophy, a practical guide to living.

PART II.—CONSTRUCTIVE  
THE REALITY OF THE WORLD OF VALUE  
AND SOME CONSEQUENCES



## CHAPTER VII

### THE SUBJECTIVIST ASSERTION THAT VALUES ARE FIGMENTS

#### *Introductory.*

In Part I. I advanced arguments designed to throw doubt upon the standards of reality accepted by common sense, by questioning the claim to exclusive reality which is ordinarily made on behalf of the familiar world and the world of science. But if these worlds are not wholly or exclusively real, the questions arise, What is real, or, What else is real? In this chapter and the next I propose to give reasons for supposing that values are real. But how, it may be asked, are we to establish the reality of values? Not, it is obvious, by the method of science; partly because the method of science is observation, and values cannot be observed, partly because science, as I have tried to show, can give us information only about those attributes of things which are in theory measurable, and value cannot be measured. We must, then, follow the method of argument.

#### *Subjectivity and Objectivity Defined.*

I propose to begin by considering a theory of value which is widely held in the contemporary world, the theory, namely, that values are subjective. It will be necessary here to say a few words with regard to the way



in which the term "subjective" is used. The term "subjective" applies in the first instance to judgments. A subjective judgment we will define as a judgment to the effect that the experience of the person making the judgment is being modified in a certain way—in other words, that something is happening in or to "the subject." An objective judgment we will define as a judgment to the effect that the world external to the person judging is characterized by a certain quality. Whether there can be objective judgments in the sense defined may be a matter of controversy. But, if there are such judgments, we shall understand them to assert that something—other than ourselves—is being, has been, or will be characterized by such and such a quality.

*Examples of Subjective Judgments.*

Now most people would be inclined to say that *prima facie* some judgments are subjective, some objective. If X judges "these gooseberries are sour," while Y judges "these gooseberries are sweet," most people would say that what X and Y are in fact judging about is not some quality which is characterizing or is possessed by the gooseberries, but about the effects produced by the gooseberries on their respective palates. The palates being different, the effects produced are different, and, as a consequence, the qualities of the experiences of X and Y are different. Hence the judgment "these gooseberries are sour" does not contradict the judgment "these gooseberries are sweet," since each of the two judgments is *about* something different. The two judgments are, therefore, according to the definition given

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above, subjective judgments. Again, most people would say, although not perhaps with the same degree of conviction, that the two judgments "the colour of the sea is now blue" and "the colour of the sea is now green" are subjective, since what they refer to is not some quality, namely, blueness or greenness, which is characterizing the sea, but the effects produced by the sea (or, to be scientifically precise, by the light waves proceeding from the place where the sea is) upon the respective retinas of the two persons making the judgments. These effects are complex effects, to which the conditions of light, the respective positions of observation, and the different characteristics of the retinas and general visual apparatus of the persons in question all contribute. For example, one of the two persons might be colour-blind, so that the colour of the sea would appear differently to him and to a person of normal vision. Because these complex physical and physiological conditions are different, so too, it might be said, are the experiences of the persons judging.

Hence when we say "the colour of the sea is now blue," what, it would generally be agreed, we *ought* to say if we were being accurate, is "the sea *looks blue to me*," or "the sea *gives me an experience of blueness*," thus making statements which are subjective in form as well as in fact.

### *Examples of Objective Judgments.*

At the other end of the scale we may, as examples of *prima facie* objective judgments, instance mathematical judgments. When somebody judges that  $3+2=5$ , or

that  $7 \times 7 = 49$ , he is purporting to make an assertion about the relations that hold between numbers. He would not ordinarily be taken to mean, "I am so constituted that I happen to think that  $3 + 2 = 5$ , but somebody differently constituted is perfectly entitled to assert that  $3 + 2 = 6$ ." He means, and would be normally understood to mean, that anybody who thinks that  $3 + 2 = 6$  is simply wrong, and that this is what he means any schoolboy who took advantage of the undeniable subjectivity of many judgments to assert his inalienable right to maintain that  $3 + 2$  does equal 6, would very quickly discover to his cost.

To revert to an example already given in another connection, a judgment passed about the temperature of a room is at least *prima facie* objective. If I judge "the temperature of this room is  $75^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit," most people would hold that my judgment admits of being either right or wrong in a sense in which the judgment "this room seems to me to be unduly hot," or, alternatively, "unduly cold," does not admit of being either right or wrong. The first judgment, in other words, purports to say something about the conditions prevailing in the room, the second about my personal reactions to these conditions. It may, of course, be the case—it almost always is the case—that psychological or physiological conditions prevailing in me determine what judgment I shall pass about the temperature of the room. If, for example, I have recently emerged from a hothouse, I shall probably judge it to be lower than I should, if I entered it from a refrigerator. But, although subjective conditions may determine the precise judgment that I actually do pass,

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they do not prevent the judgment from being at least in intention an objective one, of being, that is to say, a judgment which purports to assert something about certain conditions which are existing in the world independently both of me and of the judgment, and most people would say that, since the temperature of the room can be measured by a thermometer, there is a perfectly definite sense in which a judgment to the effect that it is so and so would be objective and right, while another judgment to the effect that it is something else would be objective and wrong. Moreover, one judgment would also be said to be more nearly right than another, if it were nearer to the thermometer reading.

Now a view of value which is widely held in the contemporary world is that, when we make judgments of value, affirming that this is true or good or beautiful, our judgments are subjective. The term "subjective" is then applied to the values themselves, and people are accustomed to say that values are subjective, meaning that, when we make judgments about them, we are only expressing our own likes and dislikes in the case of art, and our own feelings of approval and disapproval in the case of morals.

### *The Influence of Science Favourable to Subjective Views of Value.*

The subjective view of value has a long and respectable philosophical past; its prevalence in popular thinking is, however, of recent date. The reasons for this contemporary prevalence of subjectivist thinking are instructive. The most important, perhaps, is the influence of

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physical science. We live in an age whose intellectual environment has been largely built up by science. The spiritual climate of the times is, if I may so put it, scientific. Now science, as I pointed out in the first chapter,\* has tended to affirm that only those things which we can see and touch or at least can theoretically see and touch, are real. It has, as a consequence, been unconsciously assumed that whatever was not theoretically visible and tangible was not real. Hence it is as natural to-day for people to affirm that tangible and visible things are real, and intangible and invisible things are figments, as it was for people in the Middle Ages to affirm the reality of gods, angels and devils, and to regard the everyday world as being in some sense an illusion. Now values are neither visible nor tangible ; and many would say, therefore, that they are not completely real.

A second influence is the popularization of psychology and in particular of psycho-analysis. Psycho-analysis has taught people to believe that their conscious conclusions are not embraced, their conscious judgments are not passed on merits, but are the by-products of unconscious elements in their nature which are of an emotional and instinctive character. Why am I afraid of heights now ? Because I fell through a trapdoor in a loft when a child. Why do I dislike corridors ending in blank walls now ? Because, when young, I was barked at in precisely such a corridor by an angry dog in the dark. Why do I dislike men with red hair wearing panama hats now ? Because such an one made immoral advances to me when I was a little boy. Such are examples, albeit crude

\* See Chapter I., pages 31-32.

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examples, of the typical psycho-analytic explanation. It seeks the reason for a taste, a view or a judgment not in that for which the taste is apparently felt, to which the view apparently refers, or upon which the judgment is apparently passed, but in some prior and often unconscious incident in the history of the owner of the taste, the holder of the view, and the passer of the judgment. Extreme versions of this attitude will even deny that objects, persons and situations do in fact possess in their own right likeable or dislikeable qualities which it is possible for a true judgment or a correct view objectively to report.

It is as the result of the influence of this psychological attitude that, instead of discussing views upon their merits, it has become fashionable to inquire why it is that people hold them. Those who are affected by the prevalent "psychologizing" tendency do not ask, Is Communism true, or, Does God exist? They substitute the questions, Why has X become a communist, or, What are the elements in Y's nature which predispose him to a belief in God? If we apply this mode of interpretation to judgments of value, we shall tend to think that I judge this picture to be beautiful not because it is so, but because of congenital tastes or early but forgotten predilections; I hold this piece of music to be ugly because it was first heard, or some of its distinctive harmonies were first heard, when as a little boy I was wearing an uncomfortable suit of clothes, or as a young man was being snubbed by a young woman whom I desired to attract.

Let us consider in a little more detail the bearing of these contemporary attitudes, that derived from

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physical science and that which has been popularized by psycho-analysis, upon the value of religion. Their general tendency is to explain religion by explaining it away. The lines on which their treatment proceeds are broadly as follows.

### *The Subjectivist View of the Origins of Religion.*

Primitive man is represented as living in an incomprehensible world ; living, in particular, at the mercy of forces which he can neither understand nor control, forces of fire and flood, of earthquake and drought ; his crops fail, and he is assailed by famine ; his communities are swept by pestilence and disease. The feeling of helplessness engendered by these calamities is intolerable to him ; and so he devises beings who are endowed with the power to control the forces which are by him uncontrollable. Some of these beings, the nature gods, are benevolent and control the impersonal forces in his interest ; others, the devils and demons of primitive mythology, are naturally capricious, even if they are not positively hostile. Compared, however, with impersonal forces, even the naturally hostile beings possess one great advantage, which is that, being semi-human, they are accessible by human beings and responsive to human intercession. By bribery and propitiation the favour of the benevolent can be assured and the illwill of the malevolent averted. Accordingly, offerings are made of corn and cattle, of prisoners taken in war, or of the virgins of the tribe itself. A regular hierarchy of bribes is established. Thus a chief's daughter will appease greater

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anger, will secure more favour, than the daughter of a common man.

In these practices, it is said, we may discern the origin of religion. God is not a being existing in independence of man, a real and objective factor in the universe ; He is man's creation, the product of his fears and the recipient of his bribes. That is why man's gods have exhibited man's qualities, man's all too human qualities. Like men they are jealous and possessive ; like men they are subject to fits of anger, of anger which must be averted ; like men they are responsive to flattery and their good offices can be secured by propitiation. As civilization advances, the anthropomorphic figures of primitive mythology grow nebulous and dim ; in highly civilized communities they have been, to all intents and purposes, discarded. But man's need for help and comfort does not disappear ; on the contrary, it is as strong as it ever was and, oddly enough, with the growth of science grows stronger.

### *Loneliness of the Scientific Universe.*

The universe revealed by science is, we know, immeasurably huge ; it is also, so far as we can tell, completely lifeless. In the vast immensities of geological space and astronomical time life seems like a tiny glow, flickering uncertainly for a time but doomed ultimately to extinction, so soon as the material conditions which gave it birth cease to obtain. One day the sun will either collide with another star, or become extinct. When that catastrophe happens, life will cease to be.



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Such are the outlines of the universe sketched by physical science.\* And, frankly, we find it intolerable ; so intolerable, that we are driven to clothe the universe in the garments of our imagination in order to be able to assure ourselves that the *physical* outlines are not all. The outlines, we insist, are not the whole of reality ; they are not even reality at all, for behind them, we argue, there must be something which is spiritual and akin to ourselves, something which, once conceived in our own immediate image as God, has to-day with the growth of sophistication been depersonalized—do we not pride ourselves upon our emancipation from the gross anthropomorphism of savages?—into the values truth, goodness and beauty. The values, then, are not independent factors in the universe existing in their own right, the standards of human valuation, the objects of human aspiration, and the goals of human effort ; they are figments projected by man's loneliness upon the canvas of a meaningless universe for his comfort and assurance. Oblivious of their origin, he subsequently proceeds to discover with naïve delight what he has himself created, and endows with objectivity the products of subjective need. It is for these reasons, according to the subjectivist, that men have come falsely to believe that values are objective.

### *Implications of the Subjectivist View of Value.*

If the subjectivist's account is true, then the view that the universe contains values in its own right, values,

\* A rather fuller account appears in Chapter V., pages 121-126.

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that is to say, which are in some sense independent of us, must be rejected. It follows that when I say that the universe is fundamentally good, all that I mean is that I have a need to think it so. If I say that truth will triumph over falsehood, I mean no more than that statements which I wish to think true will in the end be accepted, and that those which I wish to think false will be rejected. I am not, that is to say, making judgments about things external to myself, but about myself; not about good, but about what I wish to think good; not about truth, but about what I wish to think true. For goodness and truth have no meaning or existence in their own right; they are merely the high-sounding names by which we seek to comfort our loneliness, to further our wishes and to dignify our desires. A couple of quotations from Aldous Huxley, who formerly held the subjectivist view of value and employed his literary gifts to express it with great point and force, will serve to sum up the view I have been trying to express. Here, first, is his statement of the view :

“No psychological experience” (and, therefore, no conviction, no belief, no idea) “is ‘truer,’ so far as we are concerned, than any other. . . . Science is no ‘truer’ than common sense or lunacy, than art or religion. . . . For, even if one should correspond more closely to things in themselves as perceived by some hypothetical non-human being, it would be impossible for us to discover which it was.”

Here, secondly, is his account, couched in subjectivist terms, of the origin of values :

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“A similar conjuring trick. . . . draws the Good and the Beautiful out of the seething hotch potch of diverse human tastes and sensibilities and interests, deduces Justice from our actual inequalities, and absolute Truth from the necessary . . . relativities of daily life. It is by an exactly similar process that children invent imaginary playthings to amuse their solitudes, and transform a dull, uninteresting piece of wood into a horse, a ship, a railway train—what you will.”

### *Subjectivist Account of the Origin of Moral Judgments.*

One further aspect of the subjectivist view remains to be considered before our sketch is complete. If all we mean by “true” is what it is convenient for us to believe, if all we mean by “good” is what conduces to our advantage, why, the question may be asked, do we go out of our way to formulate such conceptions as those of goodness and truth? Why use these words at all, if they have no distinctive meaning?

Two answers are given. The first is that our notions of good and bad, of right and wrong, are originally determined by nothing more exalted than considerations of our own pleasure. In other words, we judge that to be right or good which pleases us, or which pleased us once, but in the course of time we have come to forget the reason for our judgments and believe that we judge things to be right and good for their own sweet sakes.

Let us suppose, as most subjectivists do, that what we desire and all that we desire are pleasant sensations, and

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that we approve of whatever affords them to us. In course of time, it is argued, we forget why we approved of the thing, whatever it may be, that afforded the pleasant sensations and begin to approve of the thing in and for itself. As an illustration of this process of transference of approval, the case of the miser is cited. The miser like everybody else, begins by desiring money for the sake of the things that money can buy, which, in their turn, he desires for the sake of the pleasant sensations which their possession or enjoyment induce in him. He then begins to associate the pleasure given by the things bought by money with the money itself, and so, finally, comes to desire the money because of its association with pleasure. This result is commonly described by the statement that he comes to desire money for itself. The miser's case is an illustration of a transference of emotion due to association which is constantly occurring.

Thus, according to this theory, we begin by approving of something because it gives us pleasure or conduces to our advantage, and we end by approving of it in and for itself. Thus we apparently strive after what is right and try to do our duty for its own sake. And not only apparently ; we do *in fact* strive after what is right and try to do our duty for its own sake ; at least we do so now, but only because what is now called right and what now appears as our duty, was once found to be productive of pleasure or to be conducive to welfare and was accordingly approved of for that reason by our ancestors. Hence it comes about that we, the inheritors of centuries of approval, continue to approve while forgetting the reasons for approval.

*Anthropological Account of the Origin of Moral Judgments.*

A second answer to the question, What is the origin of our moral judgments? seeks to derive them from considerations of social convenience and utility. We approve of this, we condemn that, because this is useful, that harmful to the community. More precisely, we approve of this and condemn that because this *was* useful, that *was* harmful to the primitive communities from which our own derives. Thus anthropologists show how modern notions of right and wrong have developed by traceable stages from tribal rules which were demonstrably utilitarian in intention. *This*, they point out, was originally held to be right, *that* wrong, because *this* conduced, *that* militated against the welfare of the tribe. For what communities have habitually done over long periods there is gradually built up a sentiment of approval. After centuries of approval of certain qualities and of the actions which proceed from those qualities because they conduce to communal welfare, centuries of disapproval of contrary qualities and actions because they threaten it, there is born a generation in whom the sentiments of approval and disapproval appear as inherited instincts and emotions. The conclusion is the same as that already reached; our ancestors, having approved and disapproved for utilitarian reasons through many generations, we approve and disapprove instinctively, having forgotten the reasons which originally led our ancestors to do so. Emotions of approval and disapproval dictate our moral judgments; thus we call good and right

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that for which we feel the emotion of approval, bad and wrong that for which we feel the contrary emotion.

### *Subjectivist Account of Virtue and Beauty.*

For these reasons, it is said, people have been falsely led to suppose that moral virtue is an end in itself, whereas only happiness is an end in itself ; for these reasons they desire as an end the goodness which was originally desired as a means, a means, that is to say, to the true end which is happiness. People apparently found out that the practice of what we now call virtue tended to produce happiness, desired virtue as a means to happiness, and in due course, as a result of habitually desiring virtue, forgot the reason for which they originally desired it and desired it as an end in itself.

A similar treatment may be accorded to beauty. From looking at certain objects, it is said, we obtain pleasant sensations. These objects we call beautiful, meaning by the word nothing more or less than that we derive pleasant sensations from looking at them. But beauty is not a quality which attaches to things in their own right, and no one thing, therefore, is really more beautiful than another. If things were really beautiful in their own right, it would be impossible to explain the enormous divergences of taste. But if "beautiful" and "ugly" are simply the names which we give to those objects which respectively provoke the feelings of pleasure and displeasure which we experience when we contemplate works of art, it is quite easy to understand why different people should feel and judge differently about the same

work ; for they are, after all, judging not about the work itself, but about their own feelings and sensations. Thus the way to find out which is the best picture in the world is to discover which picture arouses the greatest quantity of pleasurable sensations in the greatest number of persons. Such, in brief, is the subjectivist account of value. To this account, most of those who, in the contemporary world, have considered the matter one way or the other, would, I think, be prepared to subscribe ; for beauty, truth, and goodness are to-day in eclipse, and under the influence of psychology, our sensations and feelings are become not only the bar to which everything is brought to judgment ; they are themselves the objects of the judgments which we ostensibly pass about the things which arouse them.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THAT VALUES ARE ON THE CONTRARY REAL AND OBJECTIVE

My object in this chapter is to try to establish the objective reality of values ; in the next I shall argue that values are ultimate.

There are, I think four values—truth, beauty, goodness and happiness ; and it is of these that I affirm that they are objective and ultimate. The term “ objective ” has already been defined.\* By saying that the values are ultimate, I mean not only that they are desired for their own sakes and not for the sake of anything else, but that whatever else is desired is in the long run desired, or rather should be in the long run desired, for the sake of the values. Thus values are at once the goals of human effort and the objects of human aspiration. I will consider each of the values separately from this point of view.

#### A. THAT TRUTH IS OBJECTIVE

If the reader will forgive me for resorting to a little logic, I shall not, I think, find it difficult to dispose of the subjective view of truth. When we say that a state-

\* See Chapter VII., pages 157-160.



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ment is true, what we usually mean is that it corresponds with fact. Thus if I say that a train leaves King's Cross for Edinburgh at 10 a.m., then, if my statement is true, a series of physical happenings will take place at the time and place in question which I describe by the phrase "the train has left the station." In other words, when I make a true statement I am, most people would agree, saying something about the nature of the reality to which the statement refers. And if my statement is true, it is true, independently of my making it ; it would be true even if nobody made it, and it would be true if nobody knew the fact which verified it. Now on the subjectivist view there is no such thing as an absolute truth which exists independently of anybody's knowing it. Truth for the subjectivist is what it is convenient to believe ; convenient, that is to say, on the whole and in the long run. Hence to say that so and so is true is, on the subjectivist view, merely to say that a particular person or group of persons finds that it suits their purposes to hold certain beliefs. To say that so and so is true is not, then, to make a statement about the nature of reality ; it is to say something about the beliefs which are entertained by a mind or a number of minds. So long as the holding of certain beliefs serves people's purposes, the beliefs are true ; when the beliefs cease to serve their purposes, they cease to be true. Thus the subjectivist view abolishes the notion of absolute truth and substitutes for it convenience of belief. For true conclusions based on valid arguments and corresponding to facts it substitutes conclusions which it is useful to hold, useful, that is to say, biologically or socially and in the long run ; and

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the belief that certain arguments support the conclusions and that certain facts correspond with them is itself only a useful belief.

Now if this is the correct analysis of the meaning of truth, it is also the correct analysis of the truth of the conclusions in what the analysis issues. Therefore the truth, if we may call it such, that all truths are subjective, is itself subjective. If it is subjective, it does not make a statement about the nature of things and it does not, therefore, make a statement about the nature of truth. What it does do, is to assert what some minds, the minds, namely, of those who hold subjectivist views, find it convenient to believe it. Now what some minds find it convenient to believe may be an interesting psychological fact, but it has nothing whatever to do with truth. I conclude that if the subjectivist view of truth is correct, there can be no *true* reasons for thinking it so. In fact there can be no *true* reasons for thinking anything to be so ; there can only be considerations of congeniality and convenience. Now I do not find the subjectivist view congenial ; it appears to me to rob truth of its dignity and I dislike it. Therefore, I am quite entitled on its own showing to affirm that it is not true.

## B. THAT BEAUTY IS OBJECTIVE

### *The Subjective and Objective Views of Beauty Contrasted.*

I turn to the consideration of the case of beauty. The issues raised by the question whether beauty is subjective or objective have been endlessly debated, and

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I must content myself here with the briefest of treatments. The question at issue is this : when I say " this picture is beautiful," am I making a statement to the effect that the picture is endowed with a certain quality in its own right, just as it is endowed with the quality of, let us say, squareness in its own right, or am I making a statement to the effect that I am experiencing, or that a number of people are experiencing, certain pleasurable sensations and emotions? If the first answer to the question is correct, pictures may well be beautiful, even if neither I nor anybody else appreciate them ; if the second, since to say that pictures are beautiful means merely that I or most people do, in fact, appreciate them, they obviously cannot be beautiful when nobody appreciates them. The first view allows not only for differences, but for superiorities and inferiorities of taste. Just as there are differences of keenness of vision in respect of the perception of physical qualities, so, on this view, there are differences of sensitivity in respect of the perception of aesthetic qualities. A person of good taste is one who habitually perceives and appreciates beauty when it is present ; a person of bad taste is one who is blind to beauty. On the second view, the commonly accepted belief, that some people have better taste than others, is meaningless. For on this view, when A judges that a picture is good, what he is affirming is that he is experiencing certain pleasurable sensations and emotions ; when B says that the same picture is bad, what he is affirming is that he is experiencing unpleasant or neutral sensations and emotions. A and B are not then, as they appear to be, making different judgments about the

same thing. Each of them is making a judgment about something different. A is affirming that his psychological state is on the whole pleasurable ; B, that his is neutral or unpleasant. Hence there is no difference of opinion between them any more than there is a difference of opinion between a man who says " I have a toothache " and another man who says " I have a headache." Now it must be admitted that in ordinary daily intercourse we all of us talk and act *as if* the objective view were true ; we all of us, that is to say, when we make such statements as " this picture is better than that one," or " this picture is the best that Cézanne ever painted," believe ourselves to be making statements about the pictures and not about our own states of mind. Moreover, we certainly believe that some works of art are better than others ; that the plays of Shakespeare, for example, are better than the latest bedroom farce now appearing in the west end of London. What is more, we would continue to believe that Shakespeare's plays were better, even if, over a considerable period of time, more people happened to be deriving enjoyment from the farce.

*Reasons for the Subjectivist View.*

In face of these strongly held and widely accepted beliefs which certainly *imply* the objectivist view, the onus of proof is, it is clear, laid upon those who maintain the subjectivist view. What are their reasons for maintaining it? The first reason consists simply in a denial that beauty is a quality which can belong to things in their own right in the same way as their weight, for example,

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belongs to them. The second cites the enormous diversity of opinions that exists in regard to the merits of any particular work of art, and the apparent impossibility of determining which of these varying opinions is correct ; hence the suggestion that what is here at issue is *only* a matter of personal taste.

### *Arguments against the Subjectivist View of Beauty.*

#### *(a) It springs from the Fallacy that only Physical Qualities are Real*

The first of these reasons for the subjectivist view need not detain us. It springs from the presumption that the scientific world is the only world which is real, and that only the qualities of which science is able to give an account are, therefore, real qualities. This presumption I have already examined.\* In the course of the examination I gave reasons for rejecting it. If these reasons are valid, then the fact that science can give an account of the weight, but cannot give an account of the beauty of a picture, affords no ground for supposing that its weight really exists and really belongs to it in some sense in which its beauty does not really exist and does not really belong to it. Admittedly, we do not know the beauty in the same way as we know the weight ; admittedly, we cannot measure the beauty as we measure the weight ; admittedly, too, while everybody (except some philosophers in theory †) will agree that the picture really has weight, it is possible to deny, and it often is

\* See Chapters III.-VI.

† See Chapter II., pages 58-64 and 74-77.

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denied, that the picture really has beauty. But unless we are prepared to hold that the familiar world of common-sense objects is the only world, and the visible and tangible qualities which science investigates the only qualities of this world, none of these admissions justifies us in denying that beauty may be present in the picture.

### *(b) That admitted Divergences of Taste do not constitute Evidence for Subjectivism*

The second contention is more serious and its adequate refutation would take us beyond the limits of this book. I will mention five of the more outstanding difficulties to which it is exposed.

(i) First, we have to take into account the widespread presumption that some works of art really *are* better than others. The fact that everybody does in practice believe that this is so is not, admittedly, a proof of the truth of what is believed, but the almost universal deliverances of the consciousness of mankind do constitute evidence which, unless strong reason for doing so can be brought forward, should not lightly be set aside. In this connection, it is important to realize precisely what the subjectivist view entails.

### *That if Subjectivism is True, Beauty may be Assessed by Counting Heads.*

It entails that when I say that Bach is a greater musician than my contemporaries Bimbimski and Bom-bomski, or Shakespeare a greater writer than John Smith

who habitually titillates the emotions of contemporary West End audiences by his celebrated bedroom farces, *all* that I mean is that more people derive pleasure from the works of Bach and Shakespeare than from those of Bimbimski, Bombomski and Smith. Now at any given moment it may not in fact be true that Bach and Shakespeare *are* giving more pleasure than their modern rivals ; at the present moment it is quite probably not true. What follows ? Let us suppose that we grant that such words as "great," "good," "noble," "beautiful," and so forth do have some meaning when we use them in relation to works of art—and we do habitually use them, when we criticize and approve *as if* they had meaning ; then it would follow that at this particular moment Bimbimski, Bombomski and John Smith are literally greater and better artists producing nobler and more beautiful works than Bach and Shakespeare. I do not think that it is possible to refute this subjectivist conclusion by logic. Two observations may, however, be made.

First, nobody does in fact believe it. Secondly, if it is true, we can assess the merit of a work of art by counting heads. Thus, if more people derive pleasure from the works of A than from those of his rival B, then A is inevitably and automatically a better artist than B. Now whatever we mean when we say that A is better than B, it seems self-evident to me that we do not mean to make some assertion about comparative numbers of persons. We are not, that is to say, making a statistical computation to the effect that of all those persons who are being or may in the future be brought into contact

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with the works of art respectively produced by A and B, not less than 51 per cent. will derive more pleasure from the works of A than from the works of B.

(ii) *That on the Subjectivist View the Conception of Good Taste becomes Meaningless.*

The view further entails that, when we speak of people having good taste, we mean absolutely nothing at all ; or rather it entails that all that we mean is that their taste is the highest common factor of the tastes of the greatest number of people. Now this, I should say, is quite certainly not what we mean. That the view does in fact abolish the conception of taste may be seen, if we consider for a moment the attempts which its supporters make to escape from the rather repellent conclusion indicated in (i). It is not the case, they say, that by a great work of art we mean simply one of which most people approve ; what we do mean is one of which most people of *good taste* approve. There is, we have noticed, a consensus of opinion with regard to the merit of certain acknowledged great works of art among all people of good taste, and it is to their judgment that we are implicitly referring when we speak of works of art as being great or beautiful. The subjectivist definition now becomes :—"a good work of art is one which is approved of by or gives pleasure to people of good taste." There are two comments to be made upon this definition. First, there is no such consensus of opinion as is affirmed. Not only has practically every work of art which has subsequently been called great been almost unanimously condemned



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on its first appearance, but standards of public taste change and the reputation of artists and writers change with them. Thus the eighteenth century held a poor opinion of Shakespeare and the early nineteenth century of Bach. M. Vollard has a good story to tell of the first exhibition which he held of some of Cézanne's pictures. One day he heard an outcry in the street outside his shop window.

“ A man was holding a woman by the wrists before one of the pictures. She was struggling and shouting, ‘ Fancy forcing me to look at that horror, me that ’got a prize for drawing ! ’ And the man who had thought out this excellent form of marital punishment was retorting, ‘ That’ll teach you to be nicer to me another time. ’ ”

Such an attitude on the part of the public seems less remarkable, when we learn from M. Vollard that even Renoir and Cézanne regarded Van Gogh's work as “ the painting of a madman,” as indeed it was, though not in their sense of the word.

A more important objection lies in the difficulty in determining who are the people of good taste whose judgment is to be accepted as a standard. If we hold the objective view of beauty, they are easy to define. A person of good taste is, as we have seen, simply one who habitually discerns and appreciates beauty when it is present ; but the view we are considering denies that beauty ever *is* present as an objective constituent or quality of a work of art. To say that X is beautiful means, on

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the subjectivist view, merely that some mind or minds approve of it. Thus persons of good taste cannot be defined as those who appreciate good works, or rather, they can only be so defined, if we are prepared to accept a circular definition. The circularity of the definition can be seen if we ask the following questions: Who is a person of good taste? Answer: One who habitually approves of all great works. What are great works? Answer: Those which are habitually approved of by persons of good taste. This is to define a thing by reference to something else which is in its turn defined by reference the first thing; that is to say, it is not to define it at all. By what other method are we, on this view, to determine those who may be accounted persons of good taste? We are not told. Thus there is no means of determining those whose judgment is to be accepted as affording a standard of value. It follows that when we speak of people having good taste we mean, on this view, absolutely nothing at all, unless we mean those whose taste is the highest common factor of that of the greatest possible number of people.

But it is clear, at least to me, that we do not mean this.

(iii) *That the Subjectivist View Reduces Itself to Solipsism, yet Solipsism is not Embraced.*

I described in the second chapter a well-known philosophical theory which contends that all the qualities which apparently belong to the familiar things of daily life are ideas in the mind of the observer. There are good

reasons for this view, and some philosophers have held it. Pushed to its logical conclusion, it suggests that, since we only know our own mental states, we have no ground for asserting the existence of anything except our mental states ; and it was in this form that the view, with certain important qualifications in favour of the independent existence of God, was advanced by Bishop Berkeley. The view is generally known as Solipsism. If this conclusion be accepted, then it will obviously apply to the quality beauty. Beauty, too, will be an idea in the mind of the observer. I do not believe that the view is true, but I cannot here go into the objections to it. It is, however, relevant to point out that few of those who take what I have called the subjectivist view of art have heard of the philosophical theory of Solipsism, and few of those who have heard of Solipsism are solipsists. The great majority of subjectivists would stoutly maintain that other qualities of the picture—for example, its weight, its shape, and its position in space—really *are* its qualities and really do belong to it ; they would maintain, that is to say, that when I assert that the picture is square, weighs 28 lb., and is hanging at a distance of four feet from the ceiling, I really am making statements about the picture and not about a series of events that are occurring in my own mind. Now there is no good reason that I can see for maintaining that the weight of the picture really belongs to it, and not maintaining that its beauty really belongs to it. If there is a good reason, it has never been advanced. The reasons that *are* advanced are two : it is said (*a*) that the beauty cannot be measured and assessed, and (*b*) that people differ as to whether it is present and as to

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the degree in which it is present. As regards (*a*), this is true, but it does not constitute a reason for supposing that there is nothing there to be measured and assessed, any more than that the fact that in sixth-century Athens there were no thermometers for registering the temperatures of rooms justifies us in holding that rooms in sixth-century Athens had no temperatures. As regards (*b*), the fact that people differ about beauty proves nothing except that their judgments are influenced by considerations private to themselves ; and this on reflection is precisely what one would expect.

Let us revert once more to the temperature analogy. As I have already pointed out, what I guess the temperature of a room to be is determined very largely by conditions prevailing in my own body. If at the time of guessing I were hot, I would think the room cooler than I would do, if I were cold. Similarly with beauty. What I shall think beautiful is largely determined by the time and country in which I live, by the civilization whose standards of taste I inherit, by my training, environment, temperament and age. There is also no doubt some unique factor in my original make-up of the kind which makes me dislike the marzipan in which many people delight and like the smell of privet which many people hate ; and this unique factor plays its part in forming my individual taste. But all these considerations which influence, which even determine my judgments about beauty, do not constitute a reason for supposing that I am not judging about beauty at all but am judging about my own states of mind.

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### *The Necessary Distinction between the Judging Act and the Thing Judged.*

Let me gather together these various considerations in a couple of philosophical arguments. First, we should all of us make a distinction between the act of judging and that about which we judge. Thus if I judge that the table is square, nobody would contend that my act of judging was itself square. Many philosophers would go further and assert that an act of knowing or judging is by its very nature directed upon something other than itself. There seems to be no reason why judgments about what is beautiful should be excepted from the scope of this generalization. It follows that if I judge the picture to be beautiful, I am judging about something other than myself, and I am judging that this something other is characterized by a quality which, if my judgment is correct, it possesses independently of my judging it to have it. The fact that my judgment may be mistaken does not affect the issue. I often judge objects to be in drawers when subsequent investigation proves that they are not ; but the fact that my judgment was mistaken does not mean that there are not things, that there are not drawers, and that the former are not sometimes in the latter. Secondly, if the picture is not beautiful in its own right, then a judgment about beauty is a judgment about nothing ; or rather, it is a judgment which relates to something totally different from that to which it is believed it to relate, being in fact not a judgment about a picture, but about events which are happening in the judger's own mind. If this were indeed the case, the

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questions arise : (a) How is it that we ever come to believe ourselves to be judging about pictures that they are beautiful, when there is no such thing as beauty, and we cannot, therefore, make judgment about it? ; and (b) If a judgment that a picture has beauty is merely a complimentary observation about oneself, being tantamount to the assertion that one is experiencing creditable emotions, how does anybody come gratuitously to make adverse judgments about works of art, since in doing so he is only attributing to himself the possession of dis-creditable emotions?

### (iv) *The Mysterious Quality X.*

It is not every class of object that provokes aesthetic enjoyment ; nobody, for example, derives aesthetic enjoyment from a cesspool or a rubbish heap. The experience of mankind is fairly unanimous in pronouncing that the media through which aesthetic enjoyment comes to us are limited in number. The more important media are music, painting, poetry, architecture, sculpture, and nature ; the less important are furniture, pottery, porcelain, wine, and stuffs of various kinds. We are, then, entitled to say that, broadly speaking, it is only objects of a certain class that evoke in us the peculiar experience that we call aesthetic. Objects falling into this class must do so because they possess a certain common quality in virtue of which they are assigned to it. Let us non-committally call this quality X ; then we may say that it is only objects possessing the quality X which cause us to make the judgments which consist in asserting

them to be beautiful. What can this quality be? The simple answer to this question is that it is the quality of being beautiful. Yet this precisely is the answer which, on the subjectivist view, we are not entitled to make, since the subjectivist has already pronounced beauty to be not a quality of things possessed by them in their own right, but a quality which the mind projects upon those things which evoke in it a certain kind of emotion. But since it seems to be impossible to avoid postulating the existence of *some* common quality in aesthetic objects which they possess independently of judgment by us, the quality, namely, which I have called X, there is nothing to be gained by going out of our way to deny that this quality is what we normally suppose it to be, that is to say, the quality of being beautiful.

(v) *The Logical Argument for Objectivity.*

I append an argument of a purely logical character which readers who find logic distasteful or unconvincing are asked to omit. The subjectivist contends that the sentence "this picture is beautiful" means the same as the sentence "this picture arouses pleasure in me." I will call this contention proposition (1). Now whether the contention is true or not, it is at least discussible—I am discussing it at the moment—and in order that it may be discussible, it must have meaning. Let us suppose that the subjectivist contention is true; then for the sentence "this picture is beautiful" I can substitute the sentence "this picture arouses pleasure in me" without changing the meaning. Let us make this substitution

in proposition (1). Proposition (1) now reads "the sentence 'this picture arouses pleasure in me' means the same as the sentence 'this picture arouses pleasure in me.'" I will call this proposition (2). Now proposition (2) is a tautology and is not discussible; but proposition (1) was discussible; therefore proposition (2) does not mean the same as proposition (1). But proposition (2) came to be substituted for proposition (1) as a result of the substitution of the sentence "this picture arouses pleasure in me" for the sentence "this picture is beautiful" on the ground that the two sentences mean the same thing. Since, however, the two propositions do not mean the same thing, the substitution cannot, it is clear, be made without changing the meaning of the sentences. Therefore the sentence "this picture is beautiful" does not mean the same as the sentence "this picture arouses pleasure in me." The same difficulty would attach to the substitution of any other alleged synonym for the sentence, "this picture is beautiful." For the above reasons, it appears to me that the view which asserts that the judgment "this picture is beautiful" is not an objective judgment about the picture, but is a subjective judgment to the effect that I am experiencing certain emotions, is a mistaken view. Beauty, then, is not "in the eye of the beholder"; it is a property of things which the mind recognizes and welcomes as being in some way akin to that which is best in itself, while ugliness is shunned as something alien and discordant.



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### C. THAT GOODNESS IS OBJECTIVE

#### *The Subjectivist Account of Moral Judgments*

Ethics is a branch of philosophy which is commonly studied as a separate subject. One of the most important and keenly controverted questions discussed by ethical philosophers is the question whether goodness is objective or subjective ; whether, that is to say, when I say that " X is good " or " X is right " I mean merely that X conduces to my advantage or convenience or security, or to the advantage, convenience or security of the community to which I belong ; or whether I mean that X is characterized by a certain ethical quality. I cannot, within the limited space at my disposal, attempt to do justice to the various considerations which are urged on both sides of this question. I can only briefly touch upon one or two of the more salient points.

First, as to the subjectivist case. A brief summary of the subjectivist account of the origin of our moral judgments has been given in Chapter VII. Let me recapitulate its main features. It is not, of course, denied that when I make moral judgments, I *believe* myself to be passing judgments about people's characters and the actions which proceed from them, and to be valuing them for their own sake. I praise courage, for example, as a quality which seems to me to be good in itself, and commonly hold kindness and unselfishness to be intrinsically admirable ; also, whether I do it or not, I think that I *ought* to do my duty though the heavens fall. What

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the subjectivist contends is that I only praise courage, admire unselfishness and kindness, and think that I ought to do my duty because I have forgotten the reasons which originally led my ancestors to regard these traits of character as praiseworthy and admirable, and to prescribe certain courses of conduct as being obligatory ; and the reasons are, or rather were, that the qualities praised by, and the courses of conduct recommended to the members of a society are those which conduce to the survival of the society in a hostile world and promote harmony and unity among its members. Society, therefore, does all that it can to promote these qualities and to encourage these modes of conduct by the bestowal of social approval.

A similar argument is used to explain the feeling of duty. I think I ought to do my duty because, it is said, its performance engenders in me a glow of self-satisfaction, its neglect a feeling of guilt ; and I derive satisfaction from the performance, feel guilt at the neglect, because the satisfaction and the guilt are the inherited effects of centuries of social approval and disapproval. The subjectivist account of the origin of moral judgments raises complex and difficult problems which cannot adequately be discussed in isolation, since they presuppose, and the answers that we make to them also presuppose, the background of a general ethical position. I will try, however, briefly to indicate some of the defects of the subjectivist view.

*Arguments against the Subjectivist View of Moral Judgments.*

What I am proposing to criticize is the proposition that, when I say that X is good, I am not making a statement about X, but am making a statement about somebody's feelings in regard to X ; either about my own feelings, or those of my community, or those of the governing class of my community, or those of the community from which mine is descended. Let us look a little more closely at the reasons usually given for this view. The chief reason usually advanced is derived from the relativity of moral notions. People in all ages have called different actions right and have bestowed moral approval upon different qualities and characters. What is more, what they *think* right, what they *call* moral, has as has already been pointed out, a definite and ascertainable relation to non-ethical factors. Thus I may and probably will call right the kind of conduct which, in general, is advantageous to me personally, which conduces to my pleasure, or which assists my survival ; or, again, I may and probably will call that kind of conduct right which is advantageous to my class or my country, or to the governors of my country ; or again, since there is a time lag before moral notions catch up with social needs, which was *once* advantageous to my class or my country or to the governors of my country, and of which, after a long period of approval by my ancestors, I have an inherited instinct to approve as a part of my initial psychological make-up. The conclusion is that, when I say "X is right," I do not mean that X has an objective

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characteristic of rightness which is independent of my approval ; I mean only that a certain person, or certain persons, approve of it.

These arguments do not, however, establish the conclusion asserted. What they show is that people have always evinced a disposition to call some things right and some things good or moral, what they will call right, what good or moral, depending upon circumstances. The argument shows, in other words, that circumstances determine people's views about right and good and morality ; it does not show that circumstances determine what *is* right and good and moral. Nor, unless we are to suppose that people's views on these matters are views about *nothing*, does it show that there are no such things as right and good and morality for people to have views about. If, indeed, there *were* no such things as right and good and morality, then in using such expressions as "this is right," "he is good," "that is moral," we should be making meaningless noises.

The analogy from the temperature of a room again applies. The fact that people differ in their judgments about temperature is not, we are agreed, accounted a reason for supposing that there is no temperature about which they judge. Now the difference between the two cases, the case of ethical and the case of temperature judgments, is not a difference between subjectivity and objectivity, but a difference in the mode of measuring what is objectively judged. In the case of the temperature we check the divergent judgments by reference to a thermometer, but there are no moral thermometers. This leads to a further point. If subjectivism is correct,

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"X is good" means "X produces a feeling of approval in me," or "X conduces to my advantage." It means, in fact, "X is pleasant," or "X is expedient," or "X is useful." But if "X is good," or "X is right" means the same as "X is pleasant," or "X is expedient," or "X is useful," how did the distinction between good and right, on the one hand, and expedient and pleasant and useful, on the other, ever come to be made? There is not the slightest doubt that in ordinary life we do habitually make this distinction. "This," we say, "is what I should like to do, because it is pleasant; but that is what I ought to do, because it is right." Or we say "X is a pleasanter companion, but he is not such a good man as Y." If what is good or right, is, in the last resort, exhaustively analysable into what is expedient or pleasant or useful, it is impossible to explain how the distinction came to be made. It seems reasonable, then, to suppose that the words "good" and "right" stand for concepts which we specifically distinguish from those denoted by the words "pleasant," "expedient," and "useful."

### *Subjectivist Argument from the Origin of Moral Notions Considered.*

The subjectivist attempt to dispose of objective morality by deriving it from considerations of expediency, and to attribute the origin of ethical judgments to non-ethical considerations which influenced our ancestors—people, it is said, feel to-day an obligation to do their duty for its own sake and an intuition of the intrinsic

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value of certain character traits only because they have forgotten the reasons, the non-ethical reasons, which lie at the basis of and justify our feelings of obligation and approval—is exposed to two further difficulties.

(i) Let us suppose that it could be successfully demonstrated that our feelings in regard to duty and our respect for goodness are sentiments whose origin may be traced to non-ethical considerations of expediency and pleasantness. That does not prove that there is no more in these sentiments than expediency and pleasantness now. Nobody would think of discrediting the multiplication table because the savage can only count on the fingers of one hand, or maintain that because religion began as Totemism and Exogamy there is no more than Totemism and Exogamy in religion now; or that to describe Einstein as a fish-like embryo who still retains in his neck the rudiments of gill slits tells us anything of value about the mind of Einstein now. The subjectivist argument, in other words, rests on the implied assumption that the mature state of a developing thing contains no more than its origins and is, therefore, exhaustively analysable into its origins. But this assumption is in the case of the multiplication table, the mind of Einstein and the developed state of the religious consciousness, obviously untrue. Why, then, should it be taken for granted in the case of our moral judgments?

But though we may have no right to take it for granted, nevertheless, it may be said, the assumption is in fact justified. We have then to consider on merits whether it is in fact the case that our feelings in regard to duty and our respect for goodness derive from a non-

ethical origin ; that, in other words, out of purely non-ethical elements we can obtain ethical compounds? The question at issue is analogous to such questions as, Can we from a combination of non-coloured atoms and electrons obtain coloured objects? Questions of this kind belong to metaphysics rather than to ethics, and cannot be pursued here.

(ii) It is, however, pertinent to point out that the assumption that ethical sentiments do arise out of entirely non-ethical considerations presupposes that there was a time when human beings acknowledged no ethical motives. It presupposes, that is to say, that there was a time when the distinction between "X is good" and "X is pleasant" or "X is expedient" was never made, for the reason that nobody ever judged disinterestedly "X is good." Now there must, on this assumption, have been a moment in the history of mankind when the distinction first came to be made. But why *did* it come to be made, if it is meaningless? I gave, when discussing a similar question which arose in connection with beauty, a logical argument to show that the distinction between the two sentences "this picture is beautiful" and "this picture arouses pleasure in me," was not a meaningless distinction. A similar argument may be applied to the distinction between the two sentences "this action is right" and "this action wins my approval." If this argument leads us, as I think it should, to reject the view that the distinction is meaningless now, it is equally valid against the assumption that it was ever meaningless at any time. In other words, the argument from origins merely puts the awkward problem of accounting for the

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distinction between goodness and expediency back in point of time ; it does not solve it.

The above are some of the reasons for rejecting the view that the statement " X is good " is ever exhaustively analysable into " X produces feelings of approval in certain minds." They are, that is to say, reasons for rejecting any completely subjectivist analysis.



## CHAPTER IX

### THAT VALUES ARE ULTIMATE AND CONSTITUTE THE RIGHTFUL OBJECTS OF HUMAN DESIRE.

LET us assume that the arguments for the objective reality of values given in the last chapter are sound. What is, or rather, what should be the relation of the human mind to them? In an earlier chapter \* I referred to the view that of all the objects of human desire values alone are ultimate; that is to say, while other things are desired for the sake of values, values only are desired for their own sakes. This view I must now try to support.

*That Whenever We Desire Anything it is implied that Something is Desired for its Own Sake.*

It is clear, in the first place, that the things which we desire fall into two classes. In the first class there are those things which are desired for themselves or, to adopt an alternative form of expression, those things which are regarded as being good in and for themselves. In the second class there are the things which are desired or thought to be good for the sake of, or as a means to the things which are desired or thought to be good in and for themselves. The distinction which I am trying labori-

\* See Chapter VI., pages 127-129.

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ously to make is in short the commonly understood distinction between ends and means. Let us take as an example an everyday statement to the effect that so and so is good. Quinine, we will say, is in certain circumstances good. Good for what? Good for fever. Quinine helps, in other words, to reduce fever. But why reduce fever? Because fever is a disease. But why not be diseased? Because health is better than disease. Why is health better than disease? At this point we may refuse to answer; we just see, we may say, that health is better than disease, and that is all there is to say about it. But in saying "we just see" health to be better than disease, we are absolving ourselves from the necessity of saying *why* we see it to be so. We are denying, in other words, that we can give reasons for what "we just see." Or we may try to give reasons; health, we may say, is better than disease because health makes for happiness, and disease for pain and misery. But why prefer happiness to pain and misery? With this question we have reached the same point as before. We can either say that "we just see" happiness to be preferable—and most people would be prepared to make this judgment—or we may take the argument a step further and try to give reasons for preferring happiness. But if we do this, we shall, sooner or later, reach the same point at which we have already twice tried to stop, the point at which we cease to give reasons and fall back upon the assertion "we just see." Now when we say "we just see" something to be desirable or good, we have reached the point at which we judge something to be desirable or good in and for its own sake. Thus whenever we make a judg-

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ment to the effect that something is good as a means, our judgment always entails that something *else* is good as an end. Let me give one further illustration of this important point. At this particular moment I strongly desire to stop writing and to play tennis. Why do I want to play tennis? Because, I say to myself, tennis is a good game and it does me good. Why do I say that tennis is a good game? Partly because I enjoy playing it. Tennis, as I may say, is an *enjoyable* game; partly because I enjoy beating an opponent; partly because I enjoy the sense of health and physical fatigue which a good game of tennis engenders. If hitting a ball over a net into a given area did not produce these effects, I should not, it is obvious, wish to do it.

### *Is the Sole Ultimate Good Pleasure?*

I have deliberately used the word "enjoy" in the last illustration, because it will serve to introduce the question, is enjoyment or pleasure the *only* ultimate end? From the two examples I have given, it certainly looks very much as if the true end to which all subordinate goods are a means may be personal pleasure or happiness; or, to put it more precisely, the experiencing of pleasant sensations. The experiencing of pleasant sensations seems to have been the end in the case both of quinine—for we only desire health, it may be said, because health brings happiness, and disease pain and discomfort—and of tennis. May it not, then, be the case that all subordinate and instrumental goods are desired for this reason, and that happiness is the only ultimate end?

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Many philosophers have maintained that it is, their view being known as hedonism, from the Greek word *hedone*, which means pleasure. I shall give and criticize the arguments for this view in the eleventh chapter \* ; they are strong but, in my opinion, fallacious. For the present, I shall confine myself to registering my own conviction that, although happiness is indeed an ultimate end or good, it is not the only one.

### *The Ultimate Values of Goodness and Truth.*

To return for a moment to the tennis example. One reason why I want to play tennis is my belief that in a balanced scheme of life bodily exercise plays a necessary part. If the body is not exercised, the mind becomes dull and sluggish—at least mine does. I play tennis, then, partly in order that my mind may be fit for its work which, at the moment, happens to be the writing of this book.

Why do I write this book? My motives no doubt are mixed. Some are personal: I want to increase my reputation as a philosopher; I want to make some money; I want to keep my name before the public. But these are certainly not the only considerations which are influencing me. I also want to expound certain philosophical ideas which form part of the store of wisdom which our civilization has accumulated, but which the modern world seems to me to neglect, and to neglect to its cost. If people took these ideas seriously, read the works of the philosophers who propounded them, and

\* See Chapter XI., pages 263-284.

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tried to order their lives in accordance with them, the effects would, I believe, be salutary. People would, for example, in my opinion, obtain more happiness from their lives. Do I, then, mean merely that I think they would be happier, if they believed in the reality of values and accepted the practical implications which the belief suggests? No, I mean more than this. Even, however, if this were all that I meant, it would seem to follow that it is not only my own happiness that I desire, but also that of other people.

But it is not only of happiness that I am thinking when I ask myself, why is it that I want people to read this book? Of what else, then? I also think that they would be *better* for knowing what great men have thought and said memorably about life; or, more precisely, for a knowledge of the ethical ideas which the philosophers have propounded. That increased virtue is not merely a part of increased happiness, and is not merely desired *because* it increases happiness, I am proposing to argue in Chapter XI. I conclude, then, that one of my reasons for writing this book—I hope the avowal will not set the reader against me—is to produce an increase in public virtue. But, more than this, I think that the criticism of science in Part I. and the demonstration of the reality and objectivity of values attempted in Part II. are true. They constitute, therefore, a part of the truth about the nature of things, and they emphasize an aspect of truth which common opinion to-day is apt to ignore. I wish, then, to spread the truth, or more modestly, I wish to communicate certain ideas which I believe to be true. Why do I wish to spread the truth?

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I can think of no reason whatsoever for my wish, except that I recognize truth to be a value and wish, if I can, to make some small part of it plain to others so that, knowing it, they may be in a position to order their lives in accordance with their knowledge.

### *The Universal Desire for Truth.*

I am not claiming any particular virtue for myself in respect of this desire. It exists, as I believe, in the hearts of all men, although it dominates the lives of only a few. All men, that is to say, naturally, desire truth, and other things, of course, being equal, prefer it to falsehood ; all men, in other words, naturally, and other things being equal, tell the truth. It is only when other things are not equal, when, that is to say, we desire to gain a particular end, that we lie. Thus while truth-telling is regarded as an end in itself, lying is always a means to an end beyond itself. We lie in order to deceive, in order to gain an advantage, in order to avoid giving pain ; but we tell the truth for its own sake. This is so with all of us. But, I repeat, it is only in a few men that the desire for truth is dominant. These are the scholars, the scientists, the mathematicians, and the philosophers who scorn delights and live laborious days in order to find out the truth ; to discover, in other words, the nature of what is. We account those who without ambition for power or desire for money pursue truth, as among the noblest of our species.

And when truth has, through their efforts, been recognized, and made plain to us, we are willing, in the

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absence of incentives to the contrary, to embrace it. In matters which do not directly concern us, where there are no incentives to the contrary, we embrace it without protest. Thus we have no reason whatever for maintaining that  $7 \times 7 = 49$  and that  $(a^2 - b^2) = (a + b)(a - b)$  except that these propositions are true, and that we see them to be so. Again, so far as I can see, there is no reason for holding that the earth goes round the sun, and not the sun round the earth, except that the former belief is seen to be true and the latter false. Even in matters which do directly concern us, in politics for example, we often allow ourselves to be influenced sooner or later by truth, although we struggle against it for a long time and persecute its advocates. It is fashionable to-day to decry the power of ideas. Yet with what frequency history bears witness to the power of ideas to persist and to prevail, if only their foundations be rooted in objective fact. Consider, for example, the slow history of French free thought, from the new springs of Renaissance discovery, through Rabelais and Montaigne to the Libertins and Bayle, and from them to its full development in Voltaire and Diderot. On the one side, the side of faith, is all that authority can command to suppress and destroy ; on the one side are the weapons of imprisonment, torture and death ; on the other, there is nothing but the power of the idea that is true. Yet at long last the idea prevails ; truth, in other words, like murder, will "out," if only it is given a sufficient chance. And it will "out" because human beings possess the capacity for recognizing the truth when they see it, and provided that it is presented to them often enough,

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cogently enough and persuasively enough, and they have suffered long enough and badly enough from their neglect of it, they will not only recognize it but embrace it. H. G. Wells has eloquently expressed the power of truth over the minds of men :

“ Clear thought,” he writes, “ is the quintessence of human life. In the end its acid power will disintegrate all the force and flummery of current passions and pretences, eat the life out of every false loyalty and out of every craven creed, and bite its way through to a world of light and truth.”

### *The Ultimate Character of Beauty.*

That we desire the beautiful and are repelled by the ugly is a fact testified by the value which we place upon art and the delight which we take in beauty in nature. This is true even of common men. The uncommon man places upon beauty such value that he will suffer even to the point of starvation in her service. Again and again the history of art shows us the original painter, who might have lived comfortably and easily by accepting commissions to paint the portraits of eminent persons in the accepted mode, tolerating a poverty-stricken existence in the conventional garret in order that he may create beauty in the form in which his individual vision has conceived it. The creative artist is the midwife who is entrusted with the task of bringing beauty to birth in the world, and sacrifices health, wealth, comfort and reputation to the safe delivery of his charge. Only



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too often, it is left to subsequent generations to do honour to the man whom his contemporaries neglected. As with the painter, so with the musician ; so also with the original writer, who strips the film of familiarity from our eyes and shows us new beauty in the world.

This treatment of beauty is, I am aware, inadequate. Apart from lack of space I plead two considerations in excuse. (1) If the refutation of the subjectivist view of beauty is valid, then it follows that beauty is an objective reality which we perceive and appreciate ; it is not, that is to say, merely a picture which the mind has painted upon its own windows and then mistakes for the landscape outside. (2) If the refutation of hedonism which appears in Chapter XI. is valid, then when we value and desire beauty, we are not merely valuing and desiring our own pleasant sensations. Thus the conclusion that beauty is desired and valued as an end in itself appears as a corollary of positions adopted elsewhere, a corollary which follows from the conclusions indicated in (1) and (2).\*

### *The Ultimate Value of Goodness : Socrates on the Good.*

I propose to dwell a little longer on the case of goodness, the argument that men value and desire the good for its own sake being one of the most celebrated in the history of philosophy. The argument, which is Socrates's, is that everybody naturally desires and pursues what he takes to be good. If, then, he seems to desire and pursue what is obviously not good, this is not because he desires

\* See Chapter VIII., pp. 175-189, and Chapter XI., pp. 266-271.

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what is evil, but because he has made an erroneous estimate of the good, taking to be good something that is not so in fact. To put the point in a more technical form : he is guilty not of weakness of will, but of a mistake in judgment. Thus when we pursue pleasure, wealth, emotion or sensual satisfaction, it is because at the time we believe them to be good, our vision being temporarily blinded to the real nature of good. Evil, then, is a kind of error, virtue a kind of knowledge, and in order to be virtuous all that we need is the capacity for correct judgment.

By means of what arguments does Socrates maintain this view? Let us, he would say, consider a particular virtue, for example the virtue of courage. Now it is not the case that the brave man is never afraid. Every man has a natural tendency to shrink from storming a hill crowned by a line of machine-guns with which the enemy are sweeping its slopes. "There is only one universal passion," says Napoleon in Shaw's play, *The Man of Destiny*, "fear. Of all the thousand qualities a man may have the only one you will find as certainly in the youngest drummer boy in my army as in me is fear. But," he continues, "it is fear that makes men fight." For, in spite of their fear, soldiers do in fact advance, rush the slopes and capture the enemy's guns. Why do they? Because, says Socrates, they are more afraid of some things, even than they are of the guns of the enemy. Of what things? Of such things, for example, as the doing of what is disgraceful, of feeling shame, of a reputation for cowardice, of dishonouring the regiment, of betraying their comrades. And in case these psycho-

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logical fears should not be sufficient, generals have taken care to ensure that they shall be backed by a system of discipline, which trains every soldier to carry constantly at the back of his mind the thought of a court-martial for cowardice, if he runs away in the face of the enemy. Thus, as somebody remarked during the last war, "discipline is a device for substituting the certainty of being shot if you don't 'go over the top,' for the possibility of being shot if you do," the result being that soldiers 'go over the top.' However this may be, the point upon which Socrates insists, in a Dialogue called the *Laches*, is that the brave man no less than the coward is afraid. How, then, does he differ from the coward? Because, says Socrates, he is afraid of different things, and the things he fears, the doing of what is disgraceful and so on, are such as he ought to be afraid of. They are, that is to say, justly to be feared, while the other things, the enemy's guns, are such as ought to be faced. The brave man in fact knows what is truly formidable, while the coward does not ; thus the difference between the brave man and the coward is one of knowledge or insight. One knows what ought to be feared and the other does not.

Or consider the virtue of temperance, which is discussed in the Dialogue known as the *Charmides*. Temperance consists neither in the indulgence of every part of our nature nor in the repression of every part. On the contrary, true temperance implies that some rule of conduct has been adopted according to which every part of our nature is permitted as much indulgence as is good for it, and will not interfere with the development of the

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rest. Who or what is it that lays down this rule? Clearly it is reason. Temperance, then, is a form of self-knowledge. It depends upon, or consists in, a recognition by reason of how much rope should be given to the various appetites and passions; it thus involves a certain kind of knowledge, a knowledge, namely, of the parts of our nature which should be in control and the parts which should be in subjection. The intemperate man lacks this knowledge. Not only does he not know when to put a stop to the indulgence of any part of his nature, but he does not know the proper ordering or disposition of the different parts, and he fails to recognize that his passions must be subject to a rule which has been laid down by his reason.

Once again, then, we reach the same conclusion, that virtue is a kind of knowledge, a knowledge of "what ought to be"—"ought to be," that is to say, because it is good—while evil is an ignorance of what "ought to be."

### *Criticism of Socrates's View.*

I cannot here enter into a discussion of this doctrine. Two comments must, however, be made. First, what Socrates called good or "the Good" is not to be equated with what we know as moral excellence; it includes moral excellence, but it includes much else as well, knowledge and good taste, responsiveness to beauty, reasonableness and a sense of fitness. Socrates's "good" includes, in other words, the values of truth and beauty as well as the value of moral goodness. Secondly, it

is reasonably certain that Socrates's view errs on the side of undue simplicity. To discern the nature of the good, to discern, in other words, what is really worth while for its own sake, is no doubt necessary, necessary and difficult ; and much human misery has undoubtedly been caused by the fact that people have valued and pursued as ends in themselves false goods which do not deserve to be regarded as ends in themselves.

But there is a further difficulty upon which Christianity lays stress, the difficulty, namely, of willing to do the good that we know. This is the problem of will or, as religion terms it, the problem of temptation. I know what is right, yet I do what I know to be wrong. As St. Paul puts it, "the good that I would, I do not : but the evil which I would not, that I do."

Herein lies the crux of the moral problem, and a large, perhaps the larger part of our troubles arises from our failure to solve it. It is not, therefore, true, as Socrates suggests, that men do always pursue the good, but it is true that they pursue it sometimes ; and when they do, they are valuing what is good for its own sake independently of any result or reward which may accrue from its realization. Thus, other things being equal, we all prefer honesty to dishonesty, tell the truth unless we have some *reason* for lying, and feel that we ought to repay a debt, even if we decide to keep the money for ourselves.

Finally we come to happiness ; but that people desire happiness as an end in itself is too obvious to require demonstration. Indeed, so dominant an end is happiness that many have held that it is the only ultimate end, and that all our endeavours and activities are

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inspired solely by the purpose of achieving it. I shall devote some consideration to this view in the eleventh chapter.\*

### *Other Claimants to the Title of Ultimates.*

I have tried to show that truth, beauty, goodness and happiness are values which are recognized as being desirable in and for themselves, and that they are not desired for the sake of anything else. I have tried in a word to show that they are ultimate ends. I have also suggested that they are the only ultimate ends. How is this second suggestion, the suggestion, namely, that not only are the four values desired for their own sakes, but that everything else that is desired is desired for the sake of one or other of them, to be rendered plausible? I use the word "plausible" advisedly, because no conclusive proof of this contention is known to me; indeed, in the form in which I have just stated it, it is not, I fear, strictly true. Men certainly *appear* to desire other things, for example, health or money or power, and they appear to desire them in and for themselves. But on further examination it seems extremely likely that when human beings do desire or appear to desire these things as ends in themselves, they are either victims of self-deception or guilty of perversion; that they are, therefore, as Socrates would say, making a mistake about the true nature of the good. Let us consider the supposed goods I have named in a little more detail.

\* See Chapter XI., pages 263-284.

*False Goods : (a) Salutory.*

*Health.*—Take, for example, an apparently salutary end such as health. To the invalid health certainly *seems* to be a good ; in fact it *seems* to be the only good. But once it is achieved, health is found to be boring, unless something “is done with” it. We all know a number of reasonably healthy people ; it may be that we know one or two in whom physical health rises to the level of a positive excellence, men and women who are frequently spoken of as “perfect specimens of health.” Now though we admire such an one for his physical perfection, only too often we cannot help but recognize that his life in general is no better and no happier than our own, simply because he does not know what to do with his abounding health. It is as if his existence were a perpetual training for a race that is never run. Often, indeed, the virtue and happiness of the riotously healthy person seem to be below that of the average, since the very surplus of energy with which his abounding health endows him renders it more difficult for him to occupy himself adequately and fruitfully than it is for the rest of us. Just because the challenge is greater, it is harder for him to meet it. If he fails to meet it, and if, as a result, his energy fails to find a suitable outlet, he tears himself to pieces with restlessness and boredom. In the last sentence but two the words “virtue” and “happiness” came from my pen so naturally that they can scarcely be said to have had the assent of my consciousness ; yet now I see that they are in the highest degree significant. They suggest that health is only valuable in so far as it enables

men assiduously to pursue other values, which, in the case raised by the argument, are the values of virtue and happiness. Like air or liberty, health is something that we ought to be able to take for granted ; something, therefore, that only seems to us to be good when we are deprived of it. To introduce a new expression, health is a negative rather than a positive good, negative in the sense that its goodness only makes itself felt in its absence. When we have it, we are generally unaware of it ; if we think about it at all, we realize that it is not something which can content us in itself, and that we must use the energy and the sense of wellbeing which it begets in us to pursue more positive goods. Health, then, is an instrumental good, to be used as a means to goods beyond itself. It is only to a man in an abnormal state that health appears to be a good in itself.

*False Goods : (b) Harmful.*

(i) *Money*.—Let us consider two other examples of false goods which men appear to desire for their own sake. Take money : it is, of course, true that money, as has already been pointed out,\* is often valued for its own sake. The theory of association of ideas, or, as it is now more frequently called, the theory of conditioning is put forward to explain how and why it is so valued. The Russian physiologist Pavlov tied up a dog in a glass cabinet, showed it its dinner, and constructed a device to enable him to observe the amount and frequency of flow of its saliva when its mouth watered. Next day, on showing the dinner he struck a gong, and so for a number

\* See Chapter VII., page 169.



of days. In due course the dog's mouth began to water at the sound of the gong when unaccompanied by dinner. The gong was then called a conditioned stimulus and the mouth-watering a conditioned response. Pavlov learnt to condition the response of mouth-watering in his dogs to the most unlikely stimuli such as pin-pricking and violent electric shocks. The desire for money is, it is said, similarly conditioned. We begin by desiring pleasant sensations ; that is to say, we desire happiness. We find that certain things are usually, perhaps invariably, connected with pleasant sensations ; asparagus, for example, with pleasant sensations of the palate, diamonds with the pleasant sensations aroused by ostentation and the admiration of others. Consequently we desire asparagus and diamonds, just as Pavlov's dogs salivated at the sound of the gong. The next stage is to desire for its own sake the money with which the diamonds and the asparagus are invariably associated, because it is by means of money and only of money that they and other desirable things are obtained.

To say that money is *always* desired as a means to asparagus and diamonds would not be strictly true. The miser, for example, really does desire money for its own sake, and nothing would induce him to spend it on diamonds and asparagus ; but we are, I think, entitled to say that the miser's desire for money for its own sake is a perversion, and it is usually recognized as such by the judgment of mankind. Poets have never ceased to expatiate on the vanity of riches, but it does not require a poet, or even a moralist, to observe that rich men are not among the happiest of mankind. The suicide rate,

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for example, among the unemployed rich (on the Riviera) is higher than that in any other economic class of the community, a fact which seems to suggest that the life of a man thrown helpless upon his own resources for amusement for every twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four is not the most satisfactory which mankind has succeeded in devising. The condition of those who, having made their money for themselves, retire to enjoy it, is little better, if only because in the struggle to make it they have permitted to atrophy the talents and the tastes which are necessary to enjoy it. It is to such men that we owe the familiar spectacle of the financial magnate who, retiring in order to enjoy his pile, first vainly ransacks the world for amusement, then betakes himself to the most exhausting and arduous pursuits, such as desert-exploring, mountain-climbing and yacht racing, in which he can only persuade other people to accompany him by the payment of large salaries, and finally returns to his desk to make money that he does not want in despair of finding life tolerable without the hard labour to which he has been accustomed.

While we must agree, therefore, that money is in fact, desired as an end in itself, we must add that, when it is so desired, it is universally admitted to be unsatisfying as an end, unsatisfying, since its possession inevitably provokes the question, what am I to do with it? In other words, it immediately reveals its true nature as a means to ends beyond itself. If, in the course of making it, we have disabled ourselves from using it to pursue these ends, our state is unfortunate ; as unfortunate as, in the modern world, it is common.

(ii) *Power*.—The case of power is not dissimilar. The love of power is, in the first instance, obviously susceptible of a hedonistic \* interpretation. We do not, that is to say, at any rate in the first instance, desire power for its own sake, but for the sake of its effects. Men desire power, as they say, because of what they can “do with” it. Thus, because I am powerful I can produce effects upon the lives of other people, elevating those whom I like and humbling those whom I dislike. Again, because I am powerful people admire me and flatter me, thus ministering to my pride, feeding my self-respect, and affording me the pleasant sensations of gratified vanity. What I enjoy, in fact, is not power, but the pleasant feelings which arise from the exercise of power. Now it may be said that it is *because* we enjoy the gratified vanity, the pleased pride, the enhanced self-respect, the feeling of mastery and of pleasure in its exercise that we value power, and that, if we did not enjoy these things, we should not value the power which provides them. Hence one is tempted to draw the hedonist conclusion that power is desired, because it is a means to the enjoyment of pleasant states of mind.

Nevertheless, I doubt if this conclusion is sound. I have already entered a disclaimer against the tendency to interpret and analyse developed products in terms of their embryonic beginnings.† Applying this disclaimer to the present instance we are entitled to conclude that, although it may well have been for the sake of the pleasure it brings that people originally desired power, it by no

\* See page 263 for the sense in which such words as “hedonistic” are used.

† See Chapter VIII., pages 194, 195.

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means follows that desire for pleasure is the motive which prompts the love of power among *contemporary* men and women. Moreover, as I shall try in a later chapter to show,\* the fact that the exercise of power brings pleasure and is known to bring pleasure does not prove that it is *for the sake of the pleasure* that the power is desired.

And so I should be prepared to admit that people do in fact desire power for itself, just as they have come to desire money for itself; but I should add that power regarded as an end in itself is disappointing, and that a life devoted to its pursuit, achievement and exercise is an exhausting life which returns small dividends in terms of satisfaction.

### *The Philosophers' Denunciation of Power as an End.*

This view is in no sense peculiar to the author; it has been maintained with remarkable unanimity by all the great writers on human conduct, from the poets who have found in the achievement of power their chief illustration of the vanity of human wishes, to the praises lavished by the great religious teachers upon humility and obscurity. "Never be first in the world," said Lao Tse, "for those who are never first are never exposed to attack," and added, "Let sleeping dogs lie." He also said "Great things can be reduced to small things and small things can be reduced to nothing"; "make yourself small . . . by losing that pawn one wins the whole game." The emphasis which the Christian religion places upon humility is well known, and Buddha in this respect anticipated Christ.

\* See Chapter XI., pages 269-271.

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Can any reason be assigned for this general condemnation of power as an end? Certain *general* reasons are given in the argument for the pursuit of the true, as opposed to the false values contained in the next chapter. The *particular* argument which has chiefly influenced the critics of power is the insatiability of the desire which it generates. Once one begins to long for power, one can, it seems, never have enough of it. Plato has a famous description of the power-loving man in the ninth Book of the *Republic*. He is represented as the lineal descendant of the "democratic man" described in the extract which I gave in Chapter I. He is tyrannical; he is surrounded by the base and the worthless; he is a participator in every crime, a prey to every fear and the slave of every desire which his circumstances enabled him to satisfy. In these days of strong and ruthless men who make power a good and its achievement their main purpose, Plato's summary of the power-loving man has a special appositeness:

"Is not this the prison-house in which the tyrant is bound? He has the nature we have described, full of thronging and diverse fears and lusts. He has a greedy soul, and yet he is the only man in the city who may not travel or go to see the things which all free men want to see. He lives hidden away in his house for all the world like a woman, thinking with envy of any of the other citizens who travel abroad and see things worth seeing."

The power-loving man, in other words, may be likened to one cursed by an insatiable appetite, who is

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driven by its solicitation to embark upon ever more dangerous courses to satisfy its ever-more insistent cravings. "All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," wrote Lord Acton in his epitaph upon human history. "All great men," he added, "are bad."

Our criticism of power conceived as a value is, then, that once it has been obtained, it is found to be unsatisfying. One is bored with this power one has made such efforts to achieve, and having disabled oneself by its pursuit from desiring and achieving ends of real value, one begins to look round for fresh worlds to conquer, in other words, for more power. There is a story of a millionaire who complained that although he had money enough to buy whatever he wanted, his life had given him no happiness ; so he took refuge on his yacht because, as he said, he could not command the elements.

## CHAPTER X

### SOME ACCOUNT OF THE EVOLUTION OF MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF VALUE

I AM conscious of the inadequacy of the argument of the last chapter ; I embarked upon it in the hope of showing that money and power and other things that men value are never desired for themselves, but only for the sake of other things. As the argument proceeded I found myself obliged to admit that they often are desired for themselves and to fall back upon the somewhat lame devices of suggesting either (*a*) that desire for money and power in and for themselves is a perversion, and that those who succumb to it do not, therefore, in respect of their succumbing, deserve the full title of normal humanity ; or (*b*) that though money and power are in fact desired as ends, they *ought* not to be so desired, and that their devotees reap poor dividends in terms of happiness. I was driven, in other words, to make an ethical judgment and affirm that money and power are false values in the sense that, though they are in fact pursued for themselves, they ought not to be. Now I call these lame devices because, so far from amounting to proof, I am even doubtful whether they fall within the category of argument. I want to make full avowal of the weakness of the preceding exposition because the

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avowal may attune the reader to the defects of what is to come. What is in fact to come is the constructive part of the theory of value, and, confronted with the obligation to explain why truth, goodness, beauty and happiness should be regarded as being *true* as opposed to false values, I feel constrained to warn the reader in advance that the exposition will be even less convincing than what has gone before. This is not altogether my fault. When we are discussing ultimate questions, such as those relating to values, nothing in the nature of proof is possible. The most that I can hope to do is to draw attention to a number of considerations tending to show the unique character of what I have called *true* values as objects of human desire, and the hold which they exercise over the minds of men.

### A. EVOLUTIONARY CONSIDERATIONS

#### *Purpose and Progress in Evolution.*

Let us begin with some considerations derived from the study of evolution.

Has evolution a purpose? I think that it has, but I cannot prove that it has ; nor, unless I am in a position to show what its purpose is, am I entitled to speak of its progress. For progress involves not only movement, but movement in a particular direction ; and the notion of direction entails that of goal. Now unless we know what the goal is, we cannot tell whether the movement of evolution is forwards or backwards. The point is a simple one, yet it is frequently overlooked. If I place



myself in the Strand between Temple Bar and Charing Cross and set my legs in motion, I am entitled to affirm that there is change ; that, there is process. But unless I know whether I want to go to Charing Cross or to Temple Bar, I shall be quite unable to say whether I am progressing or not. Now the suggestion which I propose to make—and I claim no greater degree of consideration for what follows than may justly be accorded to a *suggestion*—is that the object of the evolutionary process, as we are conscious of it in ourselves and can study it in the past history of man, is to achieve an increased realization of the values.

Life, throughout the period during which it may be studied, has grown increasingly powerful and complex. This increase in power and complexity preceded the appearance of man and continued after man was evolved. Many have regarded increase of power and complexity as constituting in itself evidence of progress. A process which began with the amoeba and ended with the human brain has, indeed, seemed to them to be so obviously a progress that, as Bertrand Russell somewhere remarks, they entirely overlooked the fact that whether the amoeba would agree with this opinion is not known. Russell's remark is in the highest degree relevant ; for on the issue raised by the question, "Has there been progress in evolution?", the human mind is both judge and jury in its own cause. It is, after all, the human mind that makes the judgment that progress has occurred, and not unnaturally it gives the award in its own favour ; man in fact has written all the books. . . . The following quotation from a work by Julian Huxley affords a good

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example of a biologist's attribution of progress to a development which has ended with ourselves :

“Biological evolution,” he writes, “has been appallingly slow and appallingly wasteful. It has been cruel ; it has generated the parasites and the pests as well as the more agreeable types. It has led life up innumerable blind alleys. But, in spite of this, it has achieved progress. In a few lines whose number has steadily diminished with time it has avoided the *cul-de-sac* of mere specialization and arrived at a new level of organization, more harmonious and more efficient, from which it could again launch out towards greater control, greater knowledge, and greater independence. Progress is, if you will, all-round specialization. Finally, but one line was left which was able to achieve further progress ; all the others had led up blind alleys. This was the line leading to the evolution of the human brain.

“This at one bound altered the perspective of evolution. Experience could now be handed down from generation to generation ; deliberate purpose could be substituted for the blind sifting of selection ; change could be speeded up ten-thousand-fold. In man evolution could become conscious. Admittedly, it is far from conscious yet, but the possibility is there, and it has at least been consciously envisaged.”

Huxley, it will be observed, identifies progress in evolution with control of the evolutionary process by

some of the beings who have actually evolved, resulting in the achievement by the process of what he loosely describes as consciousness—"In man evolution could become conscious"—and this achievement of consciousness through control he attributes to man's all-round specialization. Man, he implies, can do more kinds of things than any other living creature, and he can do the things that he does in more ways. "All-round specialization" is thus regarded by Huxley as at once a cause and a sign of progress.

## *The Need for a Standard of Measurement.*

In the light, however, of the considerations just adduced showing the dependence of the notion of progress on that of goal, we are entitled to ask, *why* should all-round specialization in the sense defined be regarded as an evidence of progress ; why, in other words, should human beings be regarded not only as the latest, but as the highest of organisms, merely because they can do more kinds of things than other organisms ? Is the doing of many different kinds of things in itself a good ? Clearly it is not. Many things that are done, for example the random movements of a boy kicking a stone, are neither good nor bad ; others, for example, the torturing of helpless prisoners, are bad. Clearly it is only by reference to a standard that the doing of things can be adjudged to be good, only by invoking some conception of value that we are entitled to say that evolution progressed, when man, the creature who could do many different kinds of things, evolved ; progressed yet further

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when, in place of man as such, there appeared the being whom we know as civilized man. Now a standard is something other than that which it is used to measure, for while what is measured may be many and changing, the standard must be single and unchanging. One cannot rule the lengths on a piece of paper without a ruler, and the ruler, if it is to do the job required of it, must be a fixed standard of measurement; it would obviously be useless to employ two tape measures containing different units of measurement, when one wished to measure respectively the length of a curtain and the length of the windows that it was to cover. Just as measurement involves a standard, so, as I have pointed out, the measurement of that which is moving involves a goal by the degree of its approximation to which the advance of the movement may be estimated. Only if there is such a goal can one phase of the movement be said to be more advanced than another, one stage in a process of development higher than another.

Now people frequently say that one species is higher or more developed than another, just as they frequently affirm that one society or civilization is more advanced than another. Again, we continually comment upon social and political life in terms which imply the existence of what are called ideals: we say of *this* that it makes life better, of *that* that it raises the moral tone; we praise *this* because it frees men from fear and diminishes hatred; *that* because it spurs them to high endeavour and noble ends. Now the conception of development implies a goal, just as the epithets which I have just used—"better," "high," "noble"—imply a standard. What, then, is the

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standard, what is the goal which these judgments imply? The suggestion which I wish to make is that the standards and the goals in terms of which alone our moral judgments have meaning are such as are supplied by the values.

### *The Apprehension of Value as the End of the Evolutionary Process.*

I have in other books \* suggested that the whole process of life upon this planet may be interpreted as a developing movement of search for and pursuit of value. My thesis was that life, appearing as an impulsive force in an alien world of brute matter, successively evolved beings endowed with higher and more refined qualities of consciousness in order that in and through them, its individual expressions, it might come to know and to realize the world of value. This view, as I now cannot help but see, is altogether too dramatic ; it treats the activity or force of life as if it were *itself* an individual endowed with will and consciousness of purpose—for, only an individual mind can after all conceive a purpose—and it then goes on to postulate that, in furtherance of its purpose, the activity of force of life somehow splits itself up into the different grades or levels of conscious mind represented by the infinitely numerous species of living organisms. In other words, it represents minds as a comparatively late product of the evolutionary process, yet conceives the process as something which only a mind could have inspired.

\* See my *Matter, Life and Value*, chapters vi. to x.

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The universe, I confess, does not now seem to me as simple as I once thought it, nor is the evolutionary process to be so dramatically conceived. Yet I still cling to the notion that the process of successively appearing living species which we call evolution is most appropriately to be interpreted as a growing realization of value on the part of ever-higher forms of consciousness, and I claim that the standards by means of which we assess and measure different stages of this development, designating one higher than another, are standards which entail measurement in terms of value.

### *Historical Sketch of Life's Increasing Realization of Value.*

Realization of the existence of value comes late in the evolutionary process, and to this realization the earlier forms of life upon this planet may be regarded as preparatory. Everything, indeed, happens as if, during the infinitely vast periods of its past, life was aiming at the development of those faculties which were necessary for the apprehension of value. I say that these earlier stages are merely preparatory because, although the realization of value has come late in the history of life relatively to its past, there is a future inconceivably vaster during which such intermittent realization as is now being achieved may be developed and enlarged. Let us glance for a moment at the biological time scale.

### *The Future of Man.*

Upon the most generous estimate there has been life of some sort upon the earth for about 1,200 million

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years ; \* human life—again upon a generous estimate, an estimate which would be prepared to give to doubtful human species, such as that of Neanderthal man, the benefit of the doubt—has lasted for about a million years ; human civilization, again on the most generous interpretation of the term “civilization,” for between two and three thousand. Now the period during which it is estimated that the heat of the sun will, barring accidents, remain sufficient to support the conditions which are necessary to life, as we know it, is about 1,200,000 million years, or about 1,000 times as long as the whole past history of life. Let us scale these figures down to make them manageable. If we put the past of life at 100 years, then the past of human life works out at about a month, and of human civilization, at between two and three hours. In terms of the same time scale, the future of civilization, or, rather, the future during which man has a chance to become civilized is about 100,000 years.

It will be seen that our species has considerable time at its disposal, so that even if this civilization and many successors of this civilization collapse, the adventure of life upon this planet, and more particularly of human life, will continue. There is no reason in theory why it should not continue, even if conditions cease to render it possible on this planet ; continue, for example, by means of a migration of the human race to a planet nearer the sun, or even to a planet belonging to another

\* This figure may be an extravagant over-estimate of the period during which there has been life. The figure may in fact be more like a hundred million years.

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sun. Olaf Stapledon's fascinating book *Last and First Men* examines a number of such possibilities. I mention the point because, when we extend the scope of our speculation to envisage the vast, the almost illimitable future that opens before human beings, our questions, In what terms is higher quality of life to be assessed? By reference to what standard is advancement to be measured?—assume a new significance. Men in the remote future will, we are accustomed to think, be infinitely more advanced than ourselves, just as we are more advanced than the half-human Neanderthal creatures from which we are ourselves descended.

### *The Meaning of Higher Quality Existence.*

What, then, do we mean by "more advanced"? Richer? I think not. More powerful? I have tried to show that power is not an end in itself. More comfortable? Possessed of a greater control of material things? Endowed with greater ability to tap the physical forces of the planet and to harness them to human needs? But comfort and power over physical things, like wealth and power over human beings, are not ends in themselves. They are only means to ends beyond themselves. They bestow an enormous increase of power; they release an enormous surplus of energy. But power to do what? Energy to be used in what ways? Let us, to illustrate the force of these questions, take one or two examples from the stage of evolution which we have now reached. During the last two centuries human beings have learnt how to make limbs outside themselves,



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to supplement the limbs with which nature endowed them. Thus they have contrived lifts and cranes to do the work of arms ; trains and motor cars to replace or to supplement their legs. They have even, by the invention of aeroplanes, constructed for themselves substitutes for the wings which they do not by nature possess. In a word, they have invented machines. But nobody, I take it, supposes that cranes, lifts, trains and motors, nobody supposes that even aeroplanes are ends in themselves ; their value depends upon what we do with them ; or, more precisely, upon what we do with the time that they save us and the energy accruing from the effort that they spare us. For example, trains and motor cars enable us to travel rapidly from one place to another ; *but of what advantage is this unless we put to some good use the time which we have saved to spend in the place to which we have so rapidly travelled ?*

### *Contemporary Mistakes in Valuation. Their Consequences.*

I underline the question because, as I hinted in the first chapter, our civilization falls into error precisely because, continually mistaking means for ends, it values as a good in itself this facility for rapid transport which, rightly considered, is only means to goods beyond itself. Continually it saves time, yet it has no conception of what to do with the time it has saved. Our machines, again, have enabled us to achieve an enormous advance in productivity and to supply in increasing quantities the commodities which human beings need for their comfort and sustenance ; yet each fresh advance in productivity

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throws our economic system out of gear. The world's quays and warehouses are stacked with the rotting fish and fruit that people need, but have not the money to buy, while our economic system is driven to limit the powers with which science has so embarrassingly endowed us by devising schemes to restrict the production of needed commodities. In other words, we are unable to distribute for the good of all what science has enabled us to produce for the good of all. The first example exhibits to us a civilization lacking the ethical wisdom to use for valuable ends the time which machines have won for it ; the second exhibits a civilization lacking the political wisdom to distribute for valuable ends the commodities which machines have won for it. Examples could be multiplied indefinitely, but I have said enough—at least, I hope I have said enough—to show that man's power over nature resulting in increased productivity, increased comfort and increased leisure, is not an end in itself, just as the multiplication of leisure, comfort and commodities which the power brings is not an end in itself. These things which, rightly regarded, are means to ends beyond themselves seem to be ends only because the life of man in the past has been so narrow and indigent, because people have been poor and overworked, because they have never had enough to eat and to wear, because they have been uncomfortable. Hence it is natural for them to think that leisure, comfort and money are ultimate goods, when they are in fact only instruments for the achievement of further goods, the pursuit of which is in large part dependent upon the possession of leisure, comfort and money. The moral which I wish to draw

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is that it is not by reference to such standards that the advance of civilization is to be measured, nor in terms of such goods, regarded as ends, that the life of man achieves value.

### *The Emergence of the Awareness of Value.*

And so I return to my former assertion that the values and the values alone constitute the required standard by means of which our advance is to be measured, just because they constitute the goals of our advance.

Looking back, in the light of these considerations, over the record of man's past upon the earth, the interested inquirer may discern the first beginnings of man's awareness of value. The path of human life upon the earth, long as it has been, is, as we have seen, relatively to man's future, short, and it has been very largely pre-occupied with the problem of survival. The history of early man shows how hard and continuous has been his struggle to live. The lives of almost all the human beings that have existed have been unbelievably poor and meagre. By the sweat of their brows men have wrung a scanty living from nature. Most human beings who have existed have not known from what direction their next meal would come, and when it came it is not often that it has been a square one. Man has been forced to defend himself against every kind of external enemy, against the impact of natural forces, against the ravages of wild beasts, against the attacks of other men. Given the circumstances of his life, it was inevitable that the bulk of man's activities should be devoted to enabling him to

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survive, to obtaining food and clothing and shelter, to fighting against nature, to defending himself against other men. In a word, his activities have hitherto been almost exclusively utilitarian ; almost, but not quite. And what is of interest for our present inquiry is to observe how here and there among specially favoured communities, or among specially favoured classes in numbers of communities, there gradually emerge from among so much that is utilitarian, activities that are non-utilitarian ; that are, in other words, disinterested. By a disinterested activity I mean one that is not directed to the ends of survival, such as comfort, wealth, security or power, but to ends that have no immediate bearing upon survival. Now the ends that have no immediate bearing upon survival are the values. One must, of course, survive in order to pursue them, but their pursuit does not assist survival and they themselves are ends to which survival is only a means. The values are not, that is to say, concerned with quantity or continuity of life ; they are concerned with quality. They constitute the standard by which, given that there is life, one life can be judged to be better, one community of living creatures regarded as more civilized than another.

### B. HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Let us glance briefly at the development of man's awareness of values in relation to the three values, goodness, beauty and truth considered separately.

*Goodness for its own Sake : the Emergence of Altruism.*

The concepts in terms of which Darwin interpreted the process of evolution were those of struggle for survival resulting in natural selection. Those who were most successful in the struggle survived, and the survival of the most successful was called the survival of the fittest. God's creatures preyed upon one another and nature was red in tooth and claw :

“ We dine as a rule off each other ;  
What matter the toughest survive.”

Thus the only standard of value in the animal world was the standard of survival. Such a world was innocent of moral considerations or restraints ; nor, indeed, if I am right in my suggestion that the awareness of the values only develops at a late stage in the evolutionary process, could their influence have been perceptible at the pre-human levels of life.

In spite of the legends of the Golden Age, I doubt if the early stages of human life were very different ; men fought with men, families with families, tribes with tribes, for food, hunting grounds, desert wells, and women. Some consideration, no doubt, there was for the weak and the young, but this was dictated by expediency—after all, unless the women survived the tribe could not continue—and often enough—we have Herodotus's word for it—the old were killed off that they might not be a burden upon the community. Sometimes they were even eaten so that, far from being a

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burden, they became an asset, maintaining their juniors when rations were scanty. We, of course, have reversed the process, and children now maintain their aged parents. . . . Wherever conduct approximating to what we should call morality is exhibited, it can be, I imagine, accounted for on purely utilitarian lines. In fact in its application to the morality of early communities, the subjectivist interpretation of moral notions \* would appear to be largely, if not wholly, satisfactory ; men, that is to say, called moral that which was deemed to be of advantage to the tribe, and did their duty because they feared to experience the feeling of guilt resulting from social disapproval.

As I have already argued, however, there is more in the mature state of a developing thing than there is in its primitive beginnings, and the morality of cultivated man cannot be exhaustively analysed in terms of its origins. Thus in our own time men do sometimes do their duty without *arrière pensées*, serve creed or cause without hope of reward, prefer truth to falsehood, are kind for kindness sake, and are prepared on occasion to help one another as much as they can, from sheer goodness of heart. Moreover, they are sometimes unselfish and have on occasion been known to put the common welfare before their own.

To sum up, we may say that, other things being equal, they tend, as Socrates said, to pursue the good. It must be granted that other things rarely are equal ; it is enough for my purpose to point out that they *sometimes* are, and that, *when* they are, what is good is preferred to what is bad. Now it is, of course, possible to

\* See Chapter VII., pages 168-171.

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explain all this and much more on utilitarian lines and in subjectivist terms, showing that what is apparently disinterested moral conduct has developed by traceable stages from conduct which was dictated solely by social expediency. I have argued that this subjectivist account is not wholly true, even of the origins of morality,\* and I have argued further that, even if it were true of morality once—and I grant that once it was more applicable than it is to-day—it does not follow that it is true now. If this argument be accepted, we have no alternative but to explain moral conduct, as it reveals itself to-day, as the expression of man's developing of the value of goodness and his response to the pull which the recognition of the value engenders. The fact that this awareness and this response are arbitrary and intermittent is not to the point ; it is sufficient for our purpose that they occur, and by their occurrence afford evidence for the emancipation of life from the purely biological considerations by which it was originally dominated and its responsiveness to the ideal ends which constitute its ultimate aim. Altruism, in short, is evidence for the fact that sometimes life is pulled from in front ; it is not always pushed from behind.

### *Beauty for its own Sake : A. Poetry and Drama.*

The origin of the arts was utilitarian. Poetry was devised in order to memorize the glories of kings and to celebrate the fruits of conquest. For example, the Homeric poems and the Icelandic Sagas were recited or sung by

\* See Chapter VIII., pages 194-196.

bards and minstrels after feasts ; as they could not be written down, they had to be remembered, and it was found that it was easier to remember them, if they were cut into lengths, and made metrical and rhythmical. Rhythm is perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of early poetry, the advantage of rhythm being that the lines which it informs are automatically rendered memorable ; memorable, that is to say, in the sense of being easy to remember. With the inventions of writing, and later of printing, the necessity of remembering poetry for purposes of recitation disappeared, and in due course the rhythmical element in and, therefore, the memorableness of poetry began to diminish. To-day, broadly speaking, the epic poem is a thing of the past ; yet, although it has outlived its utilitarian origin, poetry continues to be written and in the lyric, the ode and the sonnet, even in the free verse of to-day, rhythm and metre are still employed, not so much for utilitarian reasons because they render the spoken word memorable, as for aesthetic ones because they render it beautiful. Poetry, in other words, has emancipated itself from its utilitarian origins and is to-day valued for its own sake because it traps and records the beauty of the world.

Under the heading of poetry I am constrained by exigencies of space to include a few words on the origin of drama. In Jane Harrison's admirable book *Ancient Art and Ritual* the origin of Greek drama is explained on the following lines. Primitive communities are intermittently harassed by scarcity of food or its threat. When scarcity is experienced, a ritual dance is held at which the desirable commodities which the community lacks appear in effigy,



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and the production and enjoyment of them are represented in dramatic dumb show. The implied suggestion is that intensity of feeling, in this case an intense craving for food, combined with a vivid representation of that for which the craving is felt, will set going a magical process as a result of which the feeling is gratified by the concrete realization of its object. In other words, represent food and feeding with sufficient zest and vividness, and food will miraculously be vouchsafed. From these early rites of representative miming the Greek dramas of Aeschylus and Sophocles are the lineal dramatic descendents. The origin of drama as thus depicted is, it is obvious, directly utilitarian in its significance. It is hoped that by representing the process of feeding and the state of repletion, the community will realize in fact what has been represented in show.

But whereas the origin of drama is utilitarian, the plays of the great Greek tragedians are enjoyed because of the tragic emotion which they arouse. Once again, an art form which is derived from a utilitarian origin, transcends its origin and comes to be pursued and enjoyed for its own sake.

### *B. Music.*

Music, we are told, began as an accompaniment to dancing, and is still largely so employed in savage communities. Dancing was an expression of the play impulse and an aid to the mating instinct. The utilitarian significance of the mating instinct is obvious ; the play impulse, especially in the young, is said to be biologically

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useful because it causes young creatures to exercise their limbs and develop their muscles, and increases the suppleness of the body. Music was further employed to cheer the hearts of warriors about to give battle, and to signalize the greatness of kings. The use of music was, therefore, originally utilitarian. Useful to early communities as an accompaniment to the exercise of the body, an aid to ardour and efficiency in fighting, and a means, therefore, to the continuance of the tribe, the use of music was subsequently extended to express and arouse certain kinds of utilitarian emotion, particularly martial emotion. This primitive function of arousing martial emotion is still performed by the military drum and fife band. Later still, music was composed which expressed and aroused emotions which were considered to be delightful or noble. Thus Chopin evokes a delicious melancholy ; Wagner, the emotions of grandeur and conquest and the thrill of self-sacrifice. Yet though the emotions which music such as Chopin's or Wagner's arouses, the delicious woefulness, the pride of power, the glory of conquest, the ecstasy of sacrifice, are refined and ennobled versions of the emotions which are aroused in us by life, they are nevertheless still emotions of *the same type* as those which are aroused by life. That is why the typical experience of one listening to the music of Chopin or Wagner is that of being carried away on a swelling sea of sound, in which, as one rides the waves, one watches in pleasant reverie the scroll of one's past life unfold, suffused with a glow of sentiment ; or one builds cloud castles in the skies of the future, seeing oneself in a hundred glorious situations, rescuing damsels,

humiliating oppressors, dominating crowds, championing lost causes, leading forlorn hopes. In a word, the hearer of this kind of music is not introduced to another world, a world of beauty, but relives the emotions of his daily life, albeit ennobled by the music. There are many who never hear music in any other way than this.

But there is a further stage in which music ceases to be dramatic, ceases that is to say to arouse or express emotion, and achieves the beauty which is that of pure form in sound. I have written at length on this subject elsewhere,\* and cannot here pursue a theme which would take me beyond the limits of the treatment appropriate to this book. I would, however, lay stress upon the following points : (1) When we are listening to a Bach fugue or a Mozart quintet, we are not introduced to or reminded of life ; (2) the music is meaningless, or rather, it has no meaning which can be expressed in terms of life ; (3) the emotions which it arouses are not the same as those which are aroused by life. It is for this reason that Bach is often called a writer of unemotional music. In fact the emotion which his music engenders is intense, but it is *sui generis* and cannot be appropriately classified in terms appropriate to life, just because it is not akin to any emotion which life arouses. We can say in a general sort of way that it is joyous or grand or sublime ; we cannot say that it is like the emotion aroused by the scent of a woman's hair or the oncoming of dusk in a garden. Another way of putting this is to say that the music of Bach and Mozart is not dramatic or expressive.

If this be true, the secret of the hold of the greatest

\* See my *Matter, Life and Value*, chapter vi., section ii.

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music upon the soul of man must be found in the music itself. Listening to it, our attention is focused upon the beauty of pure form in sound, and the pleasure that we experience is the pleasure aroused by the value, beauty, revealed to us by the composer in the sensuous medium of sound. But this appreciation of the formal qualities of pure music which, if I am right, is the soul's response to the value, beauty, has emerged late in man's history and the attraction which most music has for most of us still, I imagine, receives a more or less adequate explanation along utilitarian and subjectivist lines.

### *C. Painting.*

One is tempted to say that the earliest pictorial art was utilitarian because it was representative, that artists drew and painted objects and persons and made their drawings and pictures as like the originals as possible, in order that they might have souvenirs of people and records of things they desired to remember, and that when the camera was invented, the function of representative art was outlived and art as a result became formal, being solely concerned to design arrangements of line and colour that were beautiful—one is, I say, tempted to give this account of the development of pictorial art, because it fits so well into the scheme of evolution from the useful to the valuable that I have sketched. Unfortunately, however, it happens not to be true. The earliest art did no doubt serve a utilitarian purpose, but it did not serve it by being ostensibly representative. Early paintings and drawings were used to express

abstract ideas rather than to make life-like representations of things and people ; to put the point technically, they aimed at the expression of concepts rather than at the representation of percepts. It is difficult to suppose that the early Egyptian painters who drew and painted the figures that one sees on the walls of tombs and on the lids of mummy cases, it is hard to believe that the Cro-magnon artists who left their records on the walls of the caves of the Dordogne, had so little technical mastery of the art of drawing that they did not know how to separate the legs of the figures they depicted. The inference is that their interest lay not in making figures look life-like, but in using them as the symbols of ideas, usually of religious ideas. The primitive paintings of the Byzantine and Italian schools are almost exclusively inspired by religious emotion. Art was used to evoke emotions of piety, to instil a feeling of reverence, to increase the sense of awe ; was used, in a word, to turn men's thoughts to God. To God, or to his worldly representatives, since there is only too much evidence that it was to confirm the power of the rulers of this world, rather than to enhance the majesty of the Ruler of the next that the art of painting was, during the pre-Renaissance period, exploited. Art, like religion, was, to use the communist phrase, employed as the opium of the people. The subject is one which I cannot pursue here ; it is enough for my purpose to emphasize the utilitarian significance of early pictorial art. With the Renaissance art tends to become representative, and in the paintings, and especially in the portraits of the sixteenth century, to convey life-like images of the forms and colours of the visible world.

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Later still, the Impressionist and post-Impressionist movements abandoned the ideal of faithful representation ; or rather, they sought to go behind or beyond that which the ordinary man's vision would regard as being a faithful representation, and by conveying the essential nature of things rather than their surface appearances—or, alternatively, their momentarily glimpsed appearances rather than their familiar utilitarian aspects—to penetrate through to the inner beauty which the familiar, utilitarian aspect overlays and conceals.

The function of non-representative art is to disentangle the beauty which lies hid in the world of things from the irrelevant utilitarian associations of the objects which it informs ; to employ a slightly different metaphor, it is to throw into relief the beauty which is manifested in matter by stripping away all that is adventitious and accidental in the sensuous material in which the beauty is embodied. Pictorial art is, therefore, in its highest development, like music, a search for beauty, a search which the artist undertakes in order that, having found beauty, he may convey what he has found to others by presenting it stripped of its irrelevant trappings and divorced from its utilitarian associations. But it should be pointed out that the performance of this function is so far from being biologically useful, that it may even be represented as biologically harmful. "Biologically speaking," says Roger Fry, "art is a blasphemy. We were given our eyes to see things and not to look at them" ; to see them, that is to say, in their relation to ourselves as instruments for serving our purposes and satisfying our desires ; not to look at them as ends in themselves.

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Once again, therefore, we have to record the evolution of an art from use to value. Men begin by painting in order to convey ideas ; they end by painting in order to render beauty.

### *Truth for its Own Sake.*

The emergence of the pursuit of truth for its own sake can perhaps most clearly be discerned in the history of science. The earlier researches of men into the constitution of the physical world were undertaken for utilitarian reasons. They hoped that by studying the stars they would contrive the future, learn it and perhaps change it. They believed that by analyzing the nature of metals they might contrive to transmute them ; perhaps to transmute them all into gold ; perhaps even to find the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life. Thus the first beginnings of science in astrology and alchemy sprang from non-scientific motives.

### *Utilitarian Origins of Science.*

Men inquired not because they wanted to know, but because they wanted to achieve power over matter and over other men, or to alter the course of nature to suit their purposes, and to gain happiness. Many of the motives which lead men to engage in scientific research are still practical. We study the winds in order that we may know what to-morrow's weather may be, and inquire into the action of chemicals in order to increase our efficiency in slaughter. It often seems as if the chief

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interest of the contemporary inquiry into the fundamental nature of matter is the prospect which it is believed to hold out of splitting the atom and so of gaining unlimited power which can be used, if necessary, for the destruction of enemies.

### *The Emergence of the Desire to Know for Its Own Sake.*

But quite early in the history of science another motive makes itself felt ; this other motive, which may be stated quite simply as the desire to obtain knowledge, may have been present from the first. It certainly inspired the inquiries of the first Greek scientist-philosophers—there is no alternative to this hybrid term—who appeared in the sixth century B.C. Our first record of the emergence of what may be termed a truly scientific attitude relates to Thales the Ionian philosopher (c. 585 B.C.). Thales, who had travelled in the East, found that the Egyptians possessed certain rules of land measurement. These had been devised in order to mark out the peasants' fields afresh after the annual inundations of the Nile had obliterated the former year's landmarks. Thales, who was not interested in the marking out of fields, saw that the method could be detached from its particular purpose and generalized into a technique for measuring areas of any shape. Thus the science of geometry was born, in other words, the use of human reason to achieve a practical end, the furtherance of human desire, was superseded by the use of human reason for the purpose of disinterested contemplation. The disinterested, contemplative reason discovered that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal and delighted to discover



why they must be equal. The land surveyor still makes use of this truth in constructing his maps ; the reason of the geometrician is content to enjoy it because it is true. Ever since the days of the ancient Greeks, the desire to know the truth for its own sake has been more or less active in the mind of man ; more active after the Renaissance, less active in the Dark Ages that succeeded the destruction of the Roman Empire. We may most appropriately regard this activity as the expression of a purely disinterested curiosity, a curiosity which moves the inquirer to undertake the study of the behaviour of the physical world for no other reason than that he wishes to study it and likes studying it. Thus men are led to tackle problems for no other reason than that they wish to know the answers. Men of science take delight in what they observe and renewed delight in what they discover. It is, for example, difficult when reading of the Abbé Mendel performing his experiments in the crossing of various strains of sweet peas, or of Einstein making the calculation that led him from the Special to the General theory of Relativity, to believe that these men were motivated by anything but the desire to know. For the mind has its pleasures no less than the body, and this, the pleasure that attends the excitement of mental exploration and adventure, is among the greatest that life has to offer.

Now the desire to know what is the case may be described as the response of the spirit to the pull of truth ; to ask why it is that men wish to know what is true is to ask an unanswerable question, for truth being a value, all that we can say is that men wish to know

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the truth for its own sake. To quote the words of a toast to which I once heard a dinner party of scientists drink : " Here's to pure science and pure mathematics, and may they never be of any damned use to anybody ! "

### *The Utilitarian By-products of Knowledge pursued for Its Own Sake.*

But now observe a curious result. It is only, broadly speaking, those inquiries which have been conducted for their own sake that have had fruitful results outside the sphere of the inquiry ; only when men have conducted researches into the nature of things without thought of benefiting humanity, that their results have benefited, or at any rate affected humanity. As the American Ambassador put it in an address delivered in Manchester in the summer of 1939, " The desire to find out which is unencumbered by any desire for a practical cash return has given us many of civilization's greatest blessings." Thus astrology became astronomy only when men ceased to study the movements of the planets because of their supposed effects upon human life, and studied them because they wanted to know how they moved. Similarly alchemy only developed into chemistry when men desisted from their attempts to discover the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, and conducted chemical experiments because they wanted to know the basic qualities of matter, and how matter of one kind behaved when compounded with matter of another. Now astronomy and chemistry have affected human life far more profoundly than astrology and alchemy.

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There is a double moral. First, it is only when the mind adopts a modest attitude to objective fact and is prepared freely to follow nature instead of prescribing to her, that it obtains the knowledge by virtue of which it is enabled to control nature. Secondly, those who wish for results from science will be well advised to leave the scientist to conduct his researches irrespective of whether they bring results or not. If science is left free, incalculable benefits to human life, both material and mental, will accrue as they have accrued in the past ; but to set the scientist to work under orders from the State, to direct his inquiries and to prescribe in advance the results he is expected to achieve, is to ensure that his inquiries will be barren and his results negligible. That freedom of research is rarely granted to the scientists in totalitarian States is one of the few hopeful facts about our generally depressing times ; for scientists who are compelled to do only what is useful to dictators will end by losing the capacity to do even what dictators think useful.

### *Summary : Civilized and Decadent Societies Defined.*

I have tried very briefly to show in the case of three of the values how the process of human evolution witnesses a continuous advance in man's awareness of and response to them. I should venture to go further and to add that the *progress* of human evolution is to be *measured* by the degree of this awareness and response. A civilized society is one which is so far emancipated from the drive of biological necessity that its members can afford to devote time and energy to non-utilitarian as opposed to

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utilitarian activities. The fact that they are in a position to afford this expenditure of time and energy is not, of course, in itself necessarily a gain, for it is not often that the time and energy which man's control over nature has won for him are devoted to activities arising out of the pursuit of value. In so far as the members of a society are possessed of time and energy which they do not employ on such activities, the society may be termed decadent, since it is wasting its opportunities and misusing its gifts. All such societies have in fact sooner or later decayed. In so far as a substantial proportion of the members of a society concern themselves with the things of the mind and the spirit, pursuing truth, valuing beauty, and cultivating virtue, theirs may be regarded as a civilized society. The best definition that I know of a civilized man defines him as one who concerns himself with matters that do not personally concern him, either by conducing to his advantage, furthering his interests, or gratifying his passions. To put the point paradoxically, the interests of a civilized man are such as are disinterested.

### C. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### *How is the Experience of Values to be Recognized?*

I will conclude this chapter by trying to give some account of the characteristic features of the experience of a mind which is engaged in appreciating or pursuing value. The account will of necessity be inadequate not only because it must be brief, but because I do not myself, to any large extent, enjoy the experiences which would

provide the data for a fuller description. The artist, the composer, the original mathematician or philosopher, the scientist engaged upon research which results in an addition to human knowledge, above all, I suspect, the mystic, would be in a position to clothe with the flesh and blood of personal experience the outlines of the brief sketch that follows. As I am not myself qualified to fill any of these rôles, I can only indicate very briefly what I have observed in others and gathered from their reports and their experiences, supplementing here and there by reference to my own. The question to which I wish to return some sort of answer is the following : having regard to the unique position which I am assigning to the values, a position in which they are represented as at once the standard of human worth and the goal of human endeavour, should not the state of mind of one who is aware of and pursues them be characterized by certain distinctive and recognizable psychological features? For example, I enjoy music, but I also enjoy horse-riding ; I like pictures, but I also like raspberries and cream. Is there nothing to distinguish the agreeable states of mind produced by listening to music and looking at pictures from the equally agreeable states of mind involved in horse-riding and eating raspberries and cream? Many philosophers have answered that there is not. The only difference, they have insisted, is a difference in quantities of pleasure. We are to consider this view in the next chapter.\* If these philosophers are right, then the activities which are involved in the pursuit of value can be adequately described by simply saying that they are activities which

\* See Chapter XI., pages 263-266.

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I happen to enjoy. Again, if subjectivism is true, the activities which are involved in the pursuit of value can be adequately described as activities which I happen to enjoy; in fact all that I *mean*, on subjectivist premises, when I say that something is valuable, is that I happen to enjoy contemplating and pursuing it. But we have agreed provisionally to assume that subjectivism is not true. Granted that it is not, we are placed under an obligation to try to discover, if we can, some psychological feature which distinguishes the awareness and pursuit of value from the general class of experiences that we happen to enjoy and activities in which it pleases us to engage. I propose to enumerate four such distinguishing characteristics. They are not clear-cut and they are not wholly separate. Indeed, to some extent they overlap. Nevertheless they are, I think, distinguishable in thought, even if they are not always distinct in practice. I shall choose my examples mainly from the sphere of aesthetics, since it is with this that I am personally most familiar.

### *Characteristics of the Enjoyment and Pursuit of Values*

#### *(a) Integration of the Personality.*

In the ordinary day-to-day activities of life some one or more parts only of our nature are involved. We concentrate with our reasons; we hunger with an appetite; we desire sexual experience with another appetite; we respond to insult with the emotion of anger; to suffering with that of pity, and so on. Only too often these different parts of our nature are at variance with

one another, so that we are not so much one person as two. Thus I desire to elope with my next-door neighbour's wife, but a sense of shame or a fear of being discovered contends with and seeks to suppress my desire. I wish to advance my career by stealing a march on a rival ; but my " better nature " tells me that this is not the kind of thing which a decent man does. This sort of conflict is all too familiar in our lives and I need not dilate upon it.

The characteristic of aesthetic, and, I should say, of the highest kind of intellectual experience, is that, when we are enjoying it, conflict between the different parts of our nature is temporarily stilled. For the duration of the experience an equilibrium is achieved, and for so long as it lasts, we are all of a piece. And since we are all of a piece, it is with the whole, and not with a part of ourselves, it is, that is to say, with reason, spirit and desire fused in a single power of experiencing, that we enjoy beauty in art or nature. For the equilibrium which great art induces is not merely a truce between warring opposites whose conflict has reached a temporary deadlock ; it involves a transcendence of the conflict. The following passage from a book entitled *The Foundations of Aesthetics*, by Ogden and Richards, admirably describes the difference between a deadlock and an equilibrium :

" The first " (the deadlock) " is the case of irresolution. It may be supposed that here we have a balance of impulses by which we seem to be impelled first one way and then another with too rapid

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alternation or too weak a thrust for either impulse to take effect. . . . In an equilibrium the impulses active, however they are specifically related, do yet sustain one state of mind. They combine to produce one phase of consciousness. In irresolution the sets of impulses sustain severally their independent phases.”

A quotation from one of Schiller’s letters puts the same point in another way. When enjoying beauty we are, he writes, “equally master of our passive and active powers, and with equal facility do we address ourselves to the serious and to sport, to calm and to emotion, to compliance and to resistance, to abstract reflection and to intuition. It is in this state of equanimity and freedom of spirit, united with power and activity, that a genuine work of art should leave us.”

### *(b) Sense of Release.*

Integration and equilibrium are related to a further characteristic—indeed, they induce it—which I will call “sense of release.” I referred in the last chapter to a view of evolution which regards it as the expression of the impulsion of a vital activity which is the driving force of the living organisms in which it is manifested. On this view, the central reality of the living organism is a continually active and ever-changing well-spring of desire which psychologists know as conation. A certain school of modern psychology, known as the Hormic school, regards this desiring and striving aspect of the



living organism as its most characteristic aspect. What is the real and essential nature of the human being? Some have answered that he is an immortal soul ; others, a biological organism ; others, an automatic machine. Some have seen his most essential characteristic in will ; others in spirit ; others in reason. The Hormic school of psychology regards him as essentially the repository of an activity which strives after and pursues ends. The best-known version of this view is Freud's theory of the *libido*, conceived as a stream of energy which, lying below the threshold of consciousness, expresses itself in the continuous succession of desirings and strivings, of likings and aversions, which constitute, for Freud, the essential texture of the individual's conscious life. Another version of the Hormic psychology is to be found in Schopenhauer's theory of the underlying Will which objectifies itself in living organisms. Some account of this theory will be given in the next chapter.\* What all these theories have in common is an attitude to human beings which represents them as essentially creatures of impulse and desire. A man's desires are, on these views, determined by all sorts of influences, by his heredity, his environment, his training, his bodily constitution ; influences which, between them, have made him what he is. A man so conceived is not free ; his choices are made for him not by him ; for his choices spring direct from his nature and his nature is the end product of the forces that have been brought to bear upon him. Man is thus represented as a creature driven this way and that, twitched now into love and now into war by the invisible

\* See Chapter XI., pages 278-280.

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forces that pull the strings. And often he is pulled different ways. Impulses drive him one way, while fear holds him back ; desire pulls, but duty forbids ; or there is a tug between conflicting desires.

I do not wish to subscribe to all the implications of this view of the human being as the puppet of his desires ; I do not, indeed, think that it is wholly true.\* But it is obvious that there is much truth in it ; obvious, that is to say, that much of our experience is in fact made up of needing and wanting, of craving and desiring ; obvious, too, that only too often we are distracted by a conflict between desires. To put the point metaphorically, life having created us for a special purpose, to carry forward the evolutionary process will not allow us to idle when we should be going about its business. It will not let us be, but is always spurring us to new activities with fresh desires ; or rather, the spur is continually applied in our ordinary daily experience. But one of the characteristics of the experience which is the awareness of value is precisely the sense of release which it brings from the constant interplay of impulse, which forms the texture of our daily life. For once, the strivings are stilled and the desires appeased ; for once, we are at rest.

### *Man as a Creature of Restless Change.*

As instruments of evolution we are in our day-to-day existence mere channels through which flows restlessly and unceasingly the current of life. We are a surge of

\* See my *Guide to Morals and Politics*, chapter vii., where the view is criticized at length.

impulses, a battlefield of desires, over which we can only at length and after a lifetime of setback and of struggle obtain a degree of mastery through the achievement of self-discipline, which is itself the outcome of desire made rational. Wishing, fearing, craving, hoping and willing, we may never, except in the rare moments of aesthetic enjoyment, be at rest. We must be for ever doing and stirring, improving and making better, meddling and changing. It is one of the paradoxes of our nature that we cannot even love a thing without seeking to change it, and by changing it to make it other than what we love. The greatest lovers of mankind have been those who have spent their lives in the endeavour to save mankind ; and since they have always insisted that mankind could not be saved except it repented, to save man was to alter him. A man cannot love the countryside without pruning and clipping, smartening and tidying, making meaningful and useful what has achieved beauty by accident, and imposing order upon the sweet disorder of nature. We cannot love a tree or even a stone, but sooner or later we must be pruning the tree or chipping a piece off the stone. We do these things because of the overmastering impulsion of our wills, yet were it not for our wills we should cease to be.

But this law, which is the law of life as evolving to an end, is not the law of life which has achieved the end. And so there is even now an exception to the law, in virtue of which we partake, if only for a moment, of the sense of rest and freedom which, we may conceive, will attend the realization by life of its goal. In the appreciation of music and of pictures we get a momentary and

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fleeting glimpse of the nature of that reality to a full knowledge of which the movement of life is progressing. For that moment, and for so long as the glimpse persists, we realize in anticipation and almost, as it were, illicitly the nature of the end. We are, if I may so put it, for the moment *there*, just as a traveller may obtain a fleeting glimpse of a distant country from a height passed on the way, and cease for a space from his journey to enjoy the view. And since we are for the moment *there*, we experience while the moment lasts that sense of liberation from the drive of life, which has been noted as one of the special characteristics of aesthetic experience. We who are part and parcel of the evolutionary stream stand for the time outside and above the stream, and are permitted for a moment to be withdrawn from the thrust and play of impulse and desire, which are our natural attributes as evolutionary tools. For so long as we enjoy our vision of the end, life lets us alone. We feel neither need nor want, and, losing ourselves in contemplation of the reality beyond us, we become for the moment selfless.

### (c) *Continuity.*

Thirdly, there is a characteristic which I can best describe by the word "continuity." Of most of our desires, it is true to say that their indulgence brings satiety, of most of our pleasures, that they please only for a limited period. While your first glass of hock may be enchanting, your second is merely pleasant and your third has lost its savour. We cannot even continue to enjoy the smell of a flower ; we catch the fragrance for a moment, but,

if we try to hold it, we find that it has evaded us. The satiety that attends the satisfaction of desire is a commonplace which I do not propose to embroider. It was a profound realization of this satiety that inspired the Greek injunction which contributes perhaps more powerfully to the right conduct of life than any other single maxim, the injunction, "Nothing too much." The characteristic of the appreciation of value that I am trying to indicate by the word "continuity" may be most conveniently indicated by the statement that the desire for value is *not* attended by satiety. On the contrary, the appreciation of values grows keener with its exercise, the enjoyment fuller. It is literally true that the more one has, the more one wants. The researcher, whose life is devoted to the pursuit of truth, does not grow bored with his researches. As he grows older, they increasingly monopolize him; indeed, he may and often does reach a stage of absorption at which he considers time not spent in the pursuits in which he takes delight to be time wasted.

### *The Acquirement of Good Taste.*

Similarly the enjoyment of beauty grows with occasions for its enjoyment.

The faculty for the appreciation of beauty, though implanted by nature, requires to be improved by training. It grows keener if it is exercised, and atrophies if it is not. In children it is latent; in young people it is largely undeveloped; it is only in middle-age that it comes to maturity. Savages may enjoy life instinctively, but not

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civilized man, for the reason that his life is not instinctive but artificial. To enjoy it, he must cultivate artificial tastes, and artificial tastes are acquired tastes. This is not to disparage acquired tastes ; far from it. All good tastes are acquired ; children, for example, prefer jam to marmalade and sweets to savouries ; boys prefer machines to music, and the adolescent taste in pictures is execrable.

I conclude that good tastes must be acquired, nay more, that they must be worked for ; they must be pursued with effort and through boredom, and their formation is conditioned by a process of growing tired of what is bad. Also, though this is a separate point which I cannot pursue, they are the first to fall away from us. Even when they are formed, we have to apply ourselves assiduously to their maintenance. When we grow old or ill, when our senses decay, or we find ourselves marooned on desert islands, it is our acquired and not our instinctive tastes that are the first to go. Good taste, then, is hard to come by and easy to lose.

Granted that the taste for beauty has been formed, granted that opportunities are provided for its enjoyment, then not only does it last throughout one's life, but grows fuller and keener as life continues. The refinement and enlargement of the aesthetic capacity is, indeed, one of the few compensations of the old for the more obvious pleasures that they have lost.

The cultivation of the values is, then, a valuable investment which repays the investor by larger dividends in terms of pleasure as the years pass. In this respect the desire for and pleasure in value are peculiar. Since the satisfaction which they bring grows with their cultiva-

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tion, they do not require to be checked by the practice of moderation. Of this desire and this pleasure at least, we cannot have too much.

### (d) *Immediacy.*

The characteristic of immediacy that attends the awareness of value, I cannot describe. I use the word simply to indicate a certain conviction of rightness, of truth, or of beauty, that does at times come to us, a conviction which is beyond reason and which reason cannot, therefore, hope to convey. All that can be said is that one *knows* that this is the right thing to do ; that one *knows* that this is the right solution of the problem ; that one *knows* that this is the only possible way to end a musical phrase ; and these things one *knows* at times with a certainty that is both absolute and immediate. This satisfying sense of rightness, this certainty of absolute conviction, come to me, albeit rarely ; but when they come, they are unmistakable. It is as if the mind had suddenly " clicked," and with the " click " of the mind making contact with value I must bring to an end this very inadequate chapter.

## CHAPTER XI

### PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS (I.) IN ETHICS. HEDONISM AND ITS REFUTATION

*Plan of this and the next two Chapters.*

In this and the remaining chapters I shall try to draw some practical conclusions, which follow from the acceptance of the reality of values. I shall take these conclusions in the main from Greek philosophy, since the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle have, in my view, written more convincingly on this subject than any of their successors. Moreover, the fact that they were living in an age which, in important respects, resembled our own—the traditional religion had been largely abandoned, accepted rules of morality were as a consequence disregarded, democracy had developed palpable defects and was threatened by the rise of authoritarian governments to which it presently succumbed—renders their mode of treatment particularly apposite to the problems of conduct and government with which our own generation is confronted. The practical morals which I wish to draw in regard to conduct may be most conveniently introduced by a discussion of the value, happiness. The reader may have observed that, though I have represented happiness as one of the ultimate values, I have not in the



discussions of the last chapter dealt with the pursuit of happiness or indicated the characteristics which attend its enjoyment. The reason for this omission is that, though happiness is a value, it is not one which should be pursued directly. On what grounds is this assertion made? They fall into two groups. First, there is the refutation of the view that the pursuit of the value happiness is the motive of all our actions. Secondly, there is a number of positive arguments tending to show that happiness is a by-product of activities devoted to securing other ends. From the conclusions of these two sets of arguments I shall proceed to derive a number of doctrines in regard to right conduct, most of which are taken from the pages of the Greek philosophers.

The ensuing discussion will then fall into three main parts. There is, first, the refutation of the doctrine known as hedonism, that pleasure is the only value and the pursuit of it the only motive of human activity ; there is, secondly, some account of the—in my view, correct—theory which regards pleasure as a by-product of the pursuit of other ends rather than as an end to be pursued directly ; and there is, thirdly, an account of certain conclusions in regard to practice which follow from the acceptance of this view of pleasure. Of these conclusions I shall mention three, the doctrine of the distinction between pleasures, the doctrine of the rationally planned life, and the doctrine of the Mean. These will require a chapter to themselves.

## HEDONISM AND ITS REFUTATION

### STATEMENT AND CRITICISM OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HEDONISM

The view that pleasure is the only value may be held in either of two main forms. It may be said that since pleasure is the only value, we ought always as a matter of prudence or expediency to pursue it ; and it may be said that we are so constituted that we cannot help but pursue it. It is mainly with this latter form of the doctrine known as psychological hedonism that I shall here concern myself, since it is widely established and popularly esteemed, and people habitually appeal to it for argument in discussion and exploit it as an excuse for selfishness in action. Some of the arguments which I shall use against this form of hedonism are, however, also applicable to the other form of hedonism, which is known as ethical hedonism.

#### *Arguments for Psychological Hedonism.*

The view which we are to consider is, then, that human beings are so constituted that they can act only in the way which they think will result in the greatest possible amount of pleasure ; pleasure, that is to say, for themselves. This view is usually supported by taking an instance of some apparently altruistic or disinterested action, such as that of the martyr going to the stake for his opinions, or the man who sacrifices his life to save a drowning child, and showing that his motive is, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the desire to obtain

pleasure for himself. If he did not *want* to do it, we are ambiguously told, then obviously he would not have done what he did.

Let us take such an example and consider it in some little detail. Let us suppose that two children, B a little boy, and G a little girl, are each presented with five shillings at Christmas. B, aiming only at his own immediate pleasure, spends his five shillings on sweets, gorges them, and is sick. Elderly relatives censure him for selfishness and read him homilies on gluttony. G, however, spends her five shillings on presents for the elderly relatives and is duly praised for unselfishness and willingness to put the pleasures of other people before her own. If her action can be taken at its face value, psychological hedonism is obviously untrue. But can it? Assuredly, the hedonist would argue, it cannot; for (a) G, who is of a calculating disposition, anticipates a return in kind from the elderly relatives. They are richer than she is: therefore she is likely to obtain more benefits in the long run from propitiating them, enlisting their favour on her behalf, and putting them under the obligation to reward her, than from a direct expenditure of the five shillings on herself.

(b) Little girls are apt to be complacent; they are also given to priggishness. They enjoy the satisfaction of feeling virtuous, bask in the sunshine of others' approval, and delightedly snuff up the odours of good reputation. The implied contrast with B, a contrast which her elders cannot help but draw, is moreover not without its effect. Therefore G acts as she does, because she prefers the pleasures of social approval to those of sweet-eating.

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(c) "If this explanation be thought too cynical," the hedonist may say, "let us begin by conceding that G is by nature unselfish and benevolent. Now we should normally describe an unselfish and benevolent person as one who likes to give pleasure to others. To gratify one's wishes is always pleasant; hence, to gratify the wish to give pleasure to others may be a source of more pleasure to the self than the direct gratification of the more obvious appetites of the self. Or, should the short statement of the case be preferred, the giving of pleasure to others is the unselfish person's most direct form of gratification. Whichever of these explanations is adopted, G is aiming at her own greatest pleasure no less directly than B is aiming at his."

### *Hedonistic Analysis of Unselfishness and Martyrdom.*

By similar methods a skilful dialectician may plausibly apply the doctrine of psychological hedonism to the interpretation of any action. Nor is the doctrine necessarily egotistical in a bad sense, though I have presented it in an egotistical form. People, it is pointed out, obtain pleasure in many different ways. Some of these ways are those which bring happiness to other people. Some of them, indeed, consist in bringing happiness to other people. The person who takes his pleasure in such a way we call unselfish, self-sacrificing, or kindly, commending and seeking to encourage by these and similar epithets ways of acting on the part of others which are advantageous to ourselves. It is not denied, then, that people often sacrifice their immediate good in order to

do good to others ; what is contended is that they are so made that this is what they take pleasure in doing. For if they do not like doing it, the hedonist ingenuously adds, they would not do it. Thus the martyr who goes to the stake for his opinions believes that he would rather suffer the pain of the fire than the shame of betraying what he takes to be the truth—apart altogether from the fact that most martyrs have convinced themselves that the penalty of betrayal will be an eternity of torment in an infernal fire, instead of half an hour's torment in an earthly one ; while the man who leads a forlorn hope to certain defeat really does care so much for his cause that he would sooner die sword in hand than live, as he would put it, "dishonoured."

Another defence of psychological hedonism against the charge of adopting too low a view of human nature takes the form of pointing out that pleasures differ in quality. The wise and the good man will prefer a little high quality pleasure to a quantity of low quality pleasure. "It is better," said John Stuart Mill, "to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied."

### *Criticism of Psychological Hedonism.*

Most philosophical treatises on ethics begin with an alleged refutation of psychological hedonism ; yet no direct disproof is possible. The most obvious method of meeting the hedonist's contention is by an appeal to introspection. The hedonist's case implies that, whenever we are faced by a choice between two alternative courses of action, and since every action we take entails a rejection

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of alternatives—"all action," said Aristotle, "is on a balance of considerations"—we may add, whenever we act at all, we first embark upon a calculation of the amounts of pleasure and the amounts of pain which will respectively attend the two alternative courses which we are choosing. The question is, does anything even remotely approximating to this process of calculation *always* take place in our minds? I should say that it certainly does not, at least it does not *always* do so, and this for two reasons. First, we act often upon impulse; we act, that is to say, without reflecting upon the consequences of our action one way or the other. Thus when I sing in my bath, flinch before the impact of an oncoming cricket ball, blow my nose, or run away from an angry bull, it is nonsense to say that I first weigh in my mind the respective consequences of singing and not singing, flinching and not flinching, blowing and not blowing, running or staying. In this connection it has been pertinently pointed out that, if psychological hedonism is true, we must all have starved in infancy. For babies maintain life by taking milk at the breast. Now on the first occasion on which a baby sucks the breast his action cannot have been motivated by the desire to obtain pleasure, since, if it really *was* the first occasion, he would have no reason to suppose that pleasure would result from his action. Hence, if psychological hedonism were correct in asserting that the only possible motive of human action is to obtain pleasure, there would be no psychological hedonists to make the assertion, since none of us would have survived starvation in infancy.

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*That We desire Specific Ends and act in order to obtain Them.*

Again, we often act in order to obtain specific things or to achieve specific ends. A traveller, we will suppose, is at the fork of two roads. He is tired and hungry and wants to get to his destination as soon as possible. He calculates, looks at the map, and ultimately takes the left fork. Why does he do so? The only possible answer seems to be, because he thinks that the left and not the right fork will bring him most quickly to his destination. It is, of course, true that when he reaches his destination he will have supper, which will bring him contentment; true, too, that, if he takes the wrong road, his hunger, if he goes hungry long enough, will make him unhappy; but to say that when he chooses the left fork, he is deliberately and consciously aiming at contentment is simply not true. He does not think about contentment on the one hand and unhappiness on the other; he thinks only of how to get to his destination.

While I was writing this last sentence, the gong rang for dinner. I finished my sentence, left my desk, and went into the dining-room. What were the motives for my action? If I had been asked, I should probably have denied that I had a conscious motive of any kind. I have gone into the dining-room for dinner in response to the sound of the gong so frequently that the action has become almost automatic. My legs take me into the dining-room without my thinking about it, just as my mouth waters at the sight of the food on the table without my thinking about it. If I had thought about it and then

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asked myself why I acted as I did, I should have answered that it was because I wanted my dinner ; I should not, that is to say, have answered that it was because I wanted pleasure. It is, of course, true that as a result of eating my dinner I experience pleasure, and, no doubt, if I reflected upon the matter in advance, I should agree that pleasure would probably be the result. But to say that I left my desk and went into the dining-room *because of* any pleasure I expected to experience is simply a misdescription of my state of mind. The hedonist theory, in other words, puts the cart before the horse. Because, as a result of performing all manner of different actions, I experience pleasure, it affirms that it is *because of* the pleasure that I expect to obtain that I perform the actions. This is simply not true. Moreover, unless I wanted to perform the actions for their own sake, I should probably not experience pleasure as a result of performing them. The very fact that I do experience pleasure when eating my dinner, riding a horse, playing tennis, talking with friends, and so on, presupposes that I do in fact desire to do these things for their own sakes. But if I can desire things for their own sake, I can desire something other than pleasure.

### *Ambiguity of the Expression "High Quality Pleasures."*

A similar fallacy lies concealed in John Stuart Mill's endeavour to render the doctrine of hedonism at once more plausible and less shocking by introducing a distinction between qualities of pleasure. A small quantity of high quality pleasure is, he says, more desirable than a large quantity of low quality pleasure.



What then, one wants to know, is denoted by the word "high," when we speak of "high quality" pleasure? Certainly not "more" or "more intense" pleasure, since, if this were the connotation of the word "high," "high quality" pleasure would be simply equivalent to more pleasure, that is to say, to a greater *quantity* of pleasure, and the distinction between qualities of pleasure would disappear. The word "high" must, then, stand for some element other than pleasure; for aesthetic experience, perhaps, or moral virtue, or intellectual activity, which is present in addition to the pleasure and whose presence is conceived to make the pleasure more desirable than it would be, if the element were absent. But in admitting that some element other than pleasure is desirable, and, because of its desirability, can increase the value of the whole, we are giving up the position that only pleasure is desired.

*Causes of the Hedonist Fallacy.*

It may be asked how such obvious mistakes as those which hedonism appears to involve ever came to be made. The answer raises issues which I cannot discuss here. Two considerations may, however, be mentioned which contribute to the plausibility of hedonism and have no doubt been instrumental in leading people to maintain it. The first consideration arises from the fact that the indulgence of every impulse and every desire does bring *some* pleasure. This is true even if the amount of pleasure which it brings is over-weighted or succeeded by a greater amount of pain. Thus the act of stealing money brings some pleasure, even if it also brings the greater pain of

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guilt and the fear of discovery. Even the act of singing in one's bath brings pleasure, the pleasure, namely, of letting off steam. Since the satisfaction of every impulse and every desire brings *some* pleasure, people have been led to suppose that it was in order to obtain this pleasure that they gave vent to impulse and sought to satisfy desire.

Secondly, account must be taken of the obvious fact that each impulse and each desire that I seek to satisfy is *my* impulse and *my* desire; since the impulse and desire are mine, it is falsely assumed that the object of satisfying the impulse and the desire must also be mine; be mine, that is to say, in the sense that the object of satisfaction is to bring about a desirable change in me. In other words, there is a confusion between the ownership and the object of the impulse or desire. But because I own the desire, it does not necessarily follow that my object in satisfying it is also mine, in the sense in which it would be mine, if the object was to bring about a desirable change in me.

These confusions, which lie at the root of hedonism, have no doubt been in part responsible for its widespread adoption by those who, having thought independently for the first time about ethical matters, have yet to think for the second.

### THE BY-PRODUCT THEORY OF PLEASURE

*That Pleasure should rarely be pursued directly.*

The conclusion that the desire to obtain pleasure is not always the motive of our actions does not mean that it never is. There are obviously some actions that we per-

form simply in order that we may obtain pleasure, and for no other reason. Nevertheless it may be doubted whether, if pleasure is what we want, we are wise to perform them. There exists a considerable body of testimony in favour of the view that pleasure should not be pursued directly. If it is, the results will almost always, it is averred, be disappointing. For pleasure, it is said, is not an end but a by-product. It is not, that is to say, produced in and for itself, but tends to invest activities directed to ends other than pleasure. Of the widespread testimony to this effect which has formed part of the practical wisdom of all the ages I will take two examples ; one from Aristotle writing in fourth-century Greece, and the other from Aldous Huxley writing in our own time. Aristotle states what I will call "the by-product theory of pleasure" as follows :

*Statements by Aristotle and Aldous Huxley.*

Let us suppose that one of our senses is in a healthy state and is engaged in reporting to us the nature of an object of an appropriate kind, for example in the case of sight, an object which is easily visible ; then, says Aristotle, the activity of that sense is necessarily pleasant. The same is true of the activity of thought when it is engaged upon a suitable object. In asserting that activities of this kind are pleasant, Aristotle emphasizes the fact that the pleasure completes or perfects the activity. It completes and perfects the activity, although it is not a part of the activity, nor is it its necessary condition. Aristotle takes a parallel from the case of

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health. When a healthy young man is engaged in an activity calling forth his powers to the full, there is a superadded completion or perfection upon his health which gives it a bloom. Now pleasure is of this character ; like the bloom upon the cheek of a young man, it is not aimed at, but is a something added, a sign that a healthy organism is functioning as it ought to do in relation to a suitable object.

Thus pleasure, which evades direct pursuit, often consents to enrich our states of mind when we are actively engaged in the pursuit and achievement of something other than pleasure. It tends, in particular, to be experienced when faculties which are fully developed are being called into the fullest activity of which they are capable in relation to a suitable object.

Now for Aldous Huxley's statement which I take from his novel *Point Counter Point*. Marjorie is speaking to Mrs. Quarles :

“ ‘ I feel so enormously much happier since I've been here, with you,’ she announced hardly more than a week after her arrival.

“ ‘ It's because you're not trying to be happy or wondering why you should have been made unhappy, because you've stopped thinking in terms of happiness or unhappiness. That's the enormous stupidity of the young people of this generation,’ Mrs. Quarles went on ; ‘ they never think of life except in terms of happiness. How shall I have a good time ? That's the question they ask. Or they complain. Why am I not having a better time ? But this is a world where good times, in their

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sense of the word, perhaps in any sense, simply cannot be had continuously, and by everybody. And even when they get their good times, it's inevitably a disappointment—for imagination is always brighter than reality. And after it's been had for a little, it becomes a bore. Everybody strains after happiness, and the result is that nobody's happy. It's because they're on the wrong road. The question they ought to be asking themselves isn't : Why aren't we happy, and how shall we have a good time ? It's : How can we please God, and why aren't we better ? If people asked themselves those questions and answered them to the best of their ability in practice, they'd achieve happiness without ever thinking about it. For it's not by pursuing happiness that you find it ; it's by pursuing salvation. And when people were wise, instead of merely clever, they thought of life in terms of salvation and damnation, not of good times and bad times. If you're feeling happy now, Marjorie, that's because you've stopped wishing you were happy and started trying to be better. Happiness is like coke—something you get as a by-product in the process of making something else.' ”

### *The Way to win Pleasure.*

That Aristotle and Huxley are right, I have little doubt. In the case of most of the things that we desire, we believe, with justice, that the harder we try, the more likely we are to obtain them. Many people hold, though I cannot entirely share their optimism, that there is nothing a man may not win, if he is sufficiently determined. “ Where

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there's a will, there's a way," they say, and even though there be no way to the moon, for the common run of things the proverb contains its truth. But of happiness it is not true. The kingdom of happiness is not to be taken by storm any more than it is to be purchased by wealth. Hence millionaires and society leaders range the world in vain and restless pursuit of that instinctive satisfaction which comes to artists, workers, and some tramps, unsought. Set out to seek happiness and it will elude you ; throw yourself body and soul into your work ; devote yourself to a cause ; lift yourself up out of the selfish little pit of vanity and desire which is the self, by giving yourself to something which is greater than the self, and on looking back you will find that you have been happy. Happiness, in short, is not a house that can be built by men's hands ; it is a flower that surprises you, a song which you hear as you pass the hedge, rising suddenly and simply into the night and dying down again.

Almost one is justified in concluding with Shaw that the best recipe for happiness is not to have enough leisure to wonder whether one is miserable or not.

### *Why one cannot repeat a Pleasure.*

The fact that happiness should not be aimed at directly, or should be aimed at only with the greatest circumspection, lest it elude us, is probably responsible for the well-known difficulty of repeating a pleasure. You do X and it pleases you, and so you do it again, hoping again to enjoy the pleasure. But you don't enjoy it again, and you wonder why. The answer, if the

foregoing argument is correct, is that it is because your motive on the second occasion is different from your motive on the first. On the first occasion you desired X and the pleasure was a by-product of its pursuit and achievement ; on the second, you desired pleasure. How often have I gone a second time to hear a piece of music that has delighted me, and have returned home unaccountably disappointed. Yet on reflection my disappointment is no longer unaccountable. On the first occasion I wanted to hear the music ; on the second, to re-experience the remembered pleasure of the first.

*The Nemesis that awaits the Pleasure-seeker.*

The warning against the direct pursuit of pleasure forms, I repeat, part of the stock-in-trade of the wisdom of the ages, and it is difficult to believe that it does not embody a truth. Nevertheless, it is a truth which no one will take on trust from others, but which each must learn afresh through boredom and disillusion for himself. Many never learn it and spend their lives considering how they shall be amused. Particularly is this true of the unemployed rich who, thrown helpless upon their own resources for amusement for twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four, live bored and boring lives in which the accepted recipe not for receiving pleasure, but for avoiding *ennui*, is constant change of occupation.

That the recipe is not wholly successful, the victims of *ennui* who may be observed in the places in which the rich gather afford convincing testimony. Consider, for example, the spectacle offered to the curious observer

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by the visitors to the Riviera. Those who are responsible for catering for their amusement proceed upon the assumption that nobody wants to do anything for more than an hour, unless it be to gamble which a few do all night and all day. The visitor to the Riviera spends an hour in the sun ; an hour at the motor rally ; an hour at cocktails ; an hour reading the papers. At the casino theatres there are long intervals, so that people may dance or gamble by way of a change. Nothing is worth serious attention, but anything may be amusing for a few minutes. For a few minutes, but never for more.

### *The Art of Living not Instinctive but Acquired.*

We are here again in sight of the truth touched upon in the last chapter,\* that leisure cannot be fruitfully employed without training and practice in the art of living, which is not instinctive but acquired. For example, the right use of leisure demands good taste, yet, as I have pointed out,† good taste can only be acquired by exercise and training and a willingness to put up with being bored with what is above one's head and to profit by one's boredom. The belief that human beings are invested by nature with the power to enjoy themselves, provided that they have the time and the money, is one of the most preposterous of the delusions which human optimism has ever imposed on human credulity. True for a week, true even for a fortnight when we are enjoying

\* See Chapter X., pages 258, 259.

† See Chapter X., page 259.



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release from a burdensome routine, the belief, if adopted as the basis of a plan of life, speedily reveals in boredom and disillusion the fallacy which it entails.

In addition to good taste, the successful use of leisure demands an absorbing interest. How often do we hear it said of those who give themselves wholly to creed or cause, who pursue truth in science, who seek to create beauty in art, or who are dominated by the resolve to improve the lot of their fellow men, that in spite of toil and disappointment they are the world's happy people. The doctor fighting in his tropical compound against infectious diseases, the biochemist seeking in his laboratory a cure for cancer, the reformer organizing a campaign for freeing slaves or abolishing flogging—in a word, all those who forget self by absorption in something other than self, have found the secret of happiness.

### *Reasons for the By-product Theory of Pleasure.*

#### *(a) Schopenhauer's Demonstration of the Necessary Surplus of Pain over Pleasure.*

I have dwelt at such length on the consequences of the neglect of the truth of the by-product theory of pleasure, that the reader may be feeling apprehensive lest argument is to give way to moral exhortation. I share his apprehensions and hasten to allay them by proceeding to consider the question whether any reasons can be given for the rôle of by-product which happiness seems so often to assume. Various explanations are in the field. There is, for example, Schopenhauer's view of

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pleasure as a state of satisfied consciousness necessarily dependent upon a preceding state of dissatisfaction. Schopenhauer conceived of reality as a universal stream or surge which he called "the Will." If we ask the question, of what is this stream or surge composed, the answer which approximates nearest to Schopenhauer's conception is that it is a stream or surge of unconscious striving. In some respects reality, as Schopenhauer conceived it, resembles the evolutionary drive or impulsion referred to in the last chapter ; from other points of view it may be likened to Freud's unconscious libido, except that it is not exclusively or even distinctively sexual. The most distinctive feature of the Will is precisely its restlessness. Like the waves of an underlying ground swell, its manifestations assume continuously new forms which express themselves in the cravings and strivings which constitute the stuff of human consciousness. For every individual is for Schopenhauer a particular manifestation or objectification of the Will, and the Will expresses itself in the individual's consciousness in the form of a continual succession of wants or needs. The discomfort of want causes the individual to take action which is designed to satisfy the want. When the want is satisfied, the individual feels pleasure, but feels it only for a moment, since, as the condition of wanting or needing is the very stuff of life, the satisfied want is immediately replaced by another. Since the pleasure which attends the satisfaction of want is dependent upon the pre-existence of the want which it satisfies, we cannot obtain the pleasure of satisfaction without undergoing the preceding pain of want—we cannot, in short, feast unless we are

first prepared to fast—and the attempt to enjoy the pleasure after the want is satisfied results only in boredom and satiety. It is for this reason that the devotees of the so-called life of pleasure, which aims at the continual enjoyment of pleasure without the intervening pain of want, obtain less satisfaction than those who devote themselves to hard and unremitting effort.

In fact, they make a double mistake. In the first place, they endeavour to enjoy a state (pleasure) which is dependent upon and conditioned by another state (need or want) without undergoing that other state ; in the second, they strive to render that which is by its very nature transitory and intermittent—since pleasure is after all only the satisfaction of need and disappears with the need which it satisfies—permanent and continuous.

Since the pain of need or desire is a permanent condition of living, and the pleasure of satisfaction is transitory, life, regarded as a commercial speculation with pleasure on the credit and pain on the debit side, must, according to Schopenhauer, be regarded as a failure. We cannot remain satisfied, try as we will, but are driven forward by the remorseless urge of life, expressing itself in a continuously recurring series of new wants and impelling us to make ever fresh efforts to satisfy them. These may or may not be successful, but the pleasure of success is precarious and short, while the pain of newly recurring need is certain.

(b) *Plato on Mixed and Unmixed Pleasures.*

It is not necessary to accept Schopenhauer's general metaphysical view, or even the pessimistic conclusion

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which he derives from his ethical theory, to recognize the force of his contentions in their bearing upon pleasure. It is, however, difficult to resist the conclusion that he pushes them too far. Not all our pleasures are dependent upon pre-existing need ; not all are conditioned by the pain of boredom or the spur of desire. Some pleasures, although not perhaps the most intense, are enjoyed on merits. These Plato, in a famous passage in a Dialogue called the *Philebus*, entitled " pure pleasures."

Pure pleasures are distinguished from impure pleasures by reason of the fact that they contain no admixture of pain. Many pleasures, Plato points out, are dependent for their pleasantness upon the degree of the preceding dissatisfaction to which they are relative. Thus the pleasure of the convalescent is dependent upon the fact of his preceding illness ; of the resting man upon his preceding fatigue ; of the water-drinking man upon his preceding thirst. These states and activities, convalescing, resting, water-drinking, are characterized by the sort of pleasure whose nature, when it is experienced in its crudest form, as, for example, in the form of relief from long and wearing pain, we all recognize for what it is. We recognize, that is to say, that the pleasure experienced on relief from pain owes its pleasantness solely to the fact that we are no longer suffering the pain which we formerly suffered. These, then, are impure pleasures and up to this point Plato agrees with Schopenhauer. There are, however, other pleasures which, Plato points out, are not dependent upon want or need. Pre-eminent in the class of pure pleasures Plato places the pleasures of intellectual and aesthetic activity. Nor, I think, can it

be denied that the very real pleasures of listening to good music, of looking at good pictures, of solving a difficult problem, of carrying on an abstract discussion, of pursuing a difficult but fruitful line of research, are in no sense determined by, or dependent upon, a preceding state of need, or a preceding experience of pain. We are not made miserable because we are *not* listening to music, although we may enjoy ourselves very much when we are.

Plato is, I think, a little too ascetic in his restriction of the class of pure pleasures to those of the mind and spirit. There are various sensory pleasures which are, I should have thought, obviously pure in the sense that their pleasantness is in no sense dependent upon the pain of need. The smell of violets and the taste of chocolate, are simple examples of these. One's pleasure in a bright frosty morning in winter, or in the colours of the leaves on an October afternoon, are more complex examples of the same class.

In general, however, it cannot be doubted that it is the pleasures of the body, that is to say of the senses, rather than of the mind which fall into the impure class. For it is the body which, once it grows accustomed to receiving a particular satisfaction, even if it be a satisfaction as innocuous as that afforded by a hot water-bottle in one's bed or a glass of sherry before one's dinner, begins to demand as a right what it previously acclaimed as a pleasant surprise, and makes a terrible fuss if its right is denied to it. This leads Plato to an important conclusion in regard to the impure pleasures. The need for them grows, he points out, with its satisfaction. Yet

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although, or, it may be, because it grows, it is ever harder to satisfy. The pain of the ever-growing need becomes greater, the pleasure of the ever-diminishing satisfaction less. Thus, if a man allows himself to be dominated by his appetites, he will find that he is in bondage to a tyrant whose demands grow ever more exacting, and who shows less and less gratitude when they are met.

### *Servitude to Cigarettes.*

Let me take a relevant example from my own experience. At an early period of my life I discovered that, if I smoked as many cigarettes as were customary among my friends, I failed to derive much pleasure from smoking. Moreover, I had noticed that unlimited cigarette smoking produced a paradoxical result. Originally adopted as a source of pleasure, cigarette smoking was apt to develop into the satisfaction of a need. Whereas in the first stage of cigarette smoking one obtained pleasure from each cigarette smoked, in the second stage one experienced a feeling of discomfort whenever one was not smoking, and was, accordingly, driven to light a cigarette not in order to obtain pleasure, but in order to allay discomfort. I deduced that the cigarette smoker expended an ever-increasing quantity of time, effort and money, and obtained as a result an ever-diminishing quantity of satisfaction. It seemed to me to be important to guard against this result, and as I had no disposition to asceticism and did not wish to forgo the pleasure of smoking, I considered in what way I might control my smoking

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so as to derive from it the maximum satisfaction. Finding it difficult, if not impossible, to control the number of cigarettes I smoked, I took to a pipe. I now smoke four pipes a day, never less and rarely more ; and generally I smoke them at the same times on each day, having one pipe after lunch, one after tea, and two after dinner. Thus each pipe is looked forward to with pleasure, and no deprivation is felt in the intervals.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOME RULES FOR THE RIGHT CONDUCT OF LIFE

#### (1) THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PLEASURES

THE discussion of hedonism and of the objections thereto contained in the last chapter enables us to draw certain conclusions bearing upon the right conduct of life. There is, first, the conclusion that we must distinguish between pleasures. Some pleasures are worth having and some are not. Broadly speaking, those that are not are the pleasures which attend the satisfaction of bodily desires ; or rather, bodily pleasures are worth having only in so far as the desires whose satisfactions they attend are subject to the rule of reason which refuses to permit any single desire to enjoy a greater degree of its own peculiar satisfaction than is compatible with the well-being of the whole. I shall return to this point below.\*

In the first chapter, I referred to the picture which Plato draws in the Eighth Book of his *Republic* of the soul of the democratic man, democratic because he puts all his desires on an equal footing and considers himself entitled to indulge whichever solicits him most

\* See pages 286-291.



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powerfully at the moment. As desire succeeds desire, he flits from one mode of living to another, now gratifying the body, now taking up with some new fad of the mind, now seeking pleasure in self-indulgence, now in a capriciously embraced asceticism. Such a life is, Plato points out, unsatisfying for a variety of reasons. First, since it is lived without rule or principle, it is apt to be an exceedingly tiring life. The man who relies upon the satisfaction of desire tries to fill every hour with a fresh occupation, to enjoy ever fresh sensations, to provide himself with eternally varying amusements ; he is never satisfied with what is ; he is always trying to add to it. Moreover, the various desires and passions conflict. As one temporarily gains the upper hand, it pulls the unfortunate patient—the word “patient” offers itself inevitably as the appropriate word for one who is deprived of the power of guiding his own course—one way, only for his course to be reversed as a contrary impulse assumes the mastery. Driven by his passions instead of being steered by his will, such a man is never at rest, but tossed hither and thither on the waves of desire, drifts through life without rudder or compass.

In the second place, the desires are likened—the simile is Plato’s—to wild beasts in that, the more they are satisfied, the more importunate they grow, so that the patient must make ever greater efforts to gain an ever-diminishing satisfaction. Thirdly, as we saw in Chapter IX.\* from Plato’s account of the tyrannical man, there is a tendency for one or other of the desires to gain strength at the expense of the rest, and ultimately

\* See pages 218–219.

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to establish a complete domination over its owner. Thus one man becomes a drug addict ; another is obsessed by the love of power ; another sells his soul for money, while a fourth is the victim of an insatiable ambition. In most men the power impulse is stronger than any other and, if unchecked, assumes domination of the whole. Yet, as we have already had occasion to observe, it is of all impulses the most insatiable, and the life to which it constrains its owner is of all lives the most tiring. The lover and the mystic can find satisfaction, since they can rest in the object of their love, but the seeker after power demands ever fresh worlds to conquer and, dissatisfied with what he has, is driven by an insatiable urge to increase his dominion. A man dominated by a single impulse is, as Plato points out, no longer in command of himself ; he has become identified with a single part or aspect of himself which takes the bit of his nature between its teeth and runs away with it. It is for this reason that the soul of such an one is called by Plato a tyrannical soul, since one part of it has established a tyranny over all the rest.

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### (2) THE SUBORDINATION OF APPETITE TO REASON

#### *The Three Parts of the Soul.*

How is this development through the democratic into the tyrannical man to be prevented ? Only by submitting the various desires to the rule of reason and leaving it to reason to decide which desires shall be satisfied, when and how much. In a famous passage in

the *Republic* Plato divides the soul into three "parts" or "aspects." There is the reasoning "part" or aspect ; the "part" which is made up of the higher and nobler emotions ; and the "part" which consists of the appetites and passions.

The division is effected as follows.

Plato points out that we frequently experience a contradiction between the course of action which we know to be right or good, and the courses which appetite demands or passion inspires. That which recognizes course X to be right and good cannot, therefore, be the same as that which inclines us to course Y. The reasoning part of the soul which, as Socrates would say, knows and desires to pursue the Good cannot, in other words, be the same as the purely appetitive part which is concerned only to secure its own satisfaction.

Now in different people different parts of the soul predominate, and the general character of an individual's conduct will be determined by the activity of the predominant part. Individuals may, therefore, be allocated to one or other of three categories, the allocation depending upon whether the reasoning, the nobly emotional, or the appetitive part of the soul prevails ; upon whether, that is to say, their lives and actions are mainly governed by reason, by noble emotions, or by the appetites. The soul of the appetitive man, who is defined as the man in whom the third part of the soul is in control, is likened to a chariot drawn by a number of spirited horses. Each horse is resolved to go its own way, and as first one and then the other gets control, the chariot is pulled this way and that ; zigzagging hither and thither, it is unable to

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maintain a consistent course or to reach a predetermined goal. The soul of the man in whom reason is in control is likened to the same chariot under the control of a charioteer, who holds the reins and permits to each steed only so much of his own way as is not incompatible with the satisfaction of the desires of the others. Moreover, he so harmonizes the pulls of the different horses that the chariot is enabled to pursue a consistent course, and ultimately arrives at the goal which the charioteer has set before himself.

### *The Greek View of Life.*

Two morals may be drawn from this analogy. First, it is only if they are subjected to the rule of reason that the appetites will achieve that degree of satisfaction which is allowable to them. This, however, may not be very large. Plato is no ascetic and subscribes, though rather tepidly, to what may be called the Greek view of life. On this view, desire is to be controlled, not mortified. For the Greeks—I am quoting from an account given by Aldous Huxley—"the art of life consisted . . . in giving every god his due. These dues were various. Thus, Apollo's due was very different from the debt a man owed to Dionysus . . . but every one was owed, and, in its proper time and season must be acknowledged. No god must be cheated and none overpaid." The ideal, then, is that of a balanced mode of living in which, acknowledging all the gods and neglecting none, we satisfy our desires in accordance with a planned scheme which permits each desire no more satisfaction (and no

less) than is compatible with fair play for the rest. Plato, I say, in theory, subscribes to this view, but the pleasures which attend desire are impure, and because of the limitations of the impure pleasures, he does not believe that the degree of happiness to be achieved by the satisfaction of desire is great. He does not, indeed, go so far as Dr. Johnson who roundly affirmed it as "certain that happiness could not be found in this life, because so many had tried to find it in such a variety of ways and had not found it," but he does think that the happiness which can be achieved by living what may be called the ordinary sensual life is strictly limited.

Such as it is, its achievement depends upon the subjection of the other parts of the soul to the rule of reason. An example may serve to illustrate what I take to be the essence of Plato's view. The period which immediately precedes the immersion of the body in cold water is exceedingly disagreeable. As one slowly enters the sea and the water mounts, first from the ankles to the knees, then from the knees to the waist, one shudders with cold and shivers with apprehension. Yet fearing to take the final plunge, many insist on prolonging this period. After a preliminary feeling of the water to discover precisely how cold it is, they dip first a toe, then a foot, then a leg, then withdrawing the affected member, they sit and contemplate distastefully the ordeal which for very shame they must sooner or later undergo. And the first plunge admittedly is an ordeal; but, granted that there must be this one thing which is unpleasant, why, reason demands, add to it a second? Granted the necessity for the plunge, is there any for the prolonged

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period of self-torture that precedes it? Reason, then, insists that the preliminary period should be as short as possible, and the reasonable man overcomes the reluctance of desire and dives into the water without hesitation or delay.

This example may serve to show how, from the purely hedonistic point of view, we should be well advised to place reason in control of desire, seeking happiness not by giving way to each solicitation, or yielding to every aversion as it is felt, but by living our lives in accordance with a plan conceived by reason and enforced by will.

*That the Achievement of Goodness no less than that of Happiness demands that Reason should be in Control.*

As with the value, happiness, so also with the value, goodness. If the third part of the soul is in control, we shall spend our lives seeking to satisfy the desire which is most strongly felt at the moment. Now the desire which is most strongly felt at the moment is not likely to be a desire for one of the values.

Most moralists seem to be agreed that the achievement of virtue involves, I will not say the suppression, but the regulation of desire; for moral virtue requires that we should satisfy our desires not unthinkingly and indiscriminately, but in the proper way, at the proper time, and to the proper degree. This requirement can only be satisfied, if the desires are under the control of the reason. Plato is strongly in sympathy with the spirit that underlies the doctrine of original sin. Our natural desires are, if not sinful, at least wild and lawless, and

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if they are allowed to run amok, will run us to the devil. Hence the need for discipline and control, if we are to achieve even a modicum of virtue.

Just as if we gratify desire without rule or reason we shall achieve but little happiness, so if we blindly follow instinct, we shall achieve but little virtue. Children and savages follow their instincts, and children and savages, therefore, have little part in virtue. The conclusion would seem to be that virtue is not instinctive but acquired. Just as the natural tastes of the young in the realm of aesthetics are crude—the reader may remember the argument in Chapter X.\*—so the natural propensities of the young in the sphere of conduct are deplorable. Let me refer again to Dr. Johnson to make my point. “A man,” Boswell reports him as saying, “grows better humoured as he grows older. He improves by experience. When young he thinks himself of great consequence, and everything of importance. As he advances in life, he learns to think himself of no consequence, and little things of little importance ; and so he becomes more patient, and better pleased. All good humour and complaisance are acquired. Naturally a child seizes directly what it sees, and thinks of pleasing itself only. By degrees, it is taught to please others, and to prefer others ; and that this will ultimately produce the greatest happiness.” If the values, whether of goodness or happiness, do not yield themselves to the direct pursuit of natural instinct, or reward the satisfaction of unchecked desire, desire and instinct must, it would seem, be disciplined by reason and will, if value is to be achieved.

\* See pages 258–260.

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Life, in short, must be lived in accordance with a rationally conceived plan.

If this be granted, two questions remain. We want to know, first, what the rationally conceived plan is and, secondly, what recipe the plan prescribes for securing the greatest amount of satisfaction for the desires. Let us take each of these questions separately.

### (3) THE DOCTRINE OF THE MEAN

#### (i) *The Plan of Life which Reason Prescribes.*

Plato does not conceive of reason as a mere instrument or tool for planning the steps which are necessary for achieving the ends set by desire. Reason is not, that is to say, for him, merely a means to the satisfaction of appetite or ambition ; it is, or at least it can be, a directive principle of life which pursues its own ends and generates the energy which is necessary for their achievement. A short preliminary explanation will enable the reader to grasp the rather peculiar significance which attaches to Plato's conception of reason.

#### *The Psychologists' Account of Reason.*

The account which most psychologists have given of the individual psyche makes provision for a striving or endeavouring element, which is usually denoted by a technical word, conation. This striving or endeavouring element is that which, setting before us certain ends as desirable, impels us to undertake the activities which are



necessary to realize them. It may also express itself merely as a kind of restless feeling which is not directed to any particular end. Conation stands, in other words, for the dynamic element in the individual's make-up, and, as such, it is usually differentiated from reason whose function is represented as confined to planning the steps which may be necessary to reach the objectives which conation sets before us.

*And Plato's.*

Plato, however, envisages no such separation. Reason is not for him one thing, desire another ; for although he describes one "part" of the soul as "the reasoning part," it does not, therefore, follow that it is without conation or desire. For Plato every "part" of the soul is endowed with its own appropriate form of desire. Thus the reasoning "part" desires, although what it desires are the ends appropriate to reason, which Plato conceives of as the values, goodness, beauty and truth. What is more, the reasoning "part" can exercise controlling, even coercive functions ; it can, and in the right-living man it should, coerce the other parts of the soul into proper subordination to its authority. The reasoning "part" of the soul contains, therefore, an element of will ; it possesses, as modern psychologists would say, its own particular dynamism. It is only on the basis of this conception that we are justified in speaking of a predominantly reasonable man or a predominantly reasonable mode of life. For, if the reason of Plato's reasoning

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“ part ” of the soul were to be conceived either as a purely intellectual faculty, the light by means of which we are enabled to understand abstract truth or to follow a chain of reasoning, or as a purely practical faculty, the instrument by means of which we achieve the ends of the desiring “ part ” of the soul, then there would be no such thing as a characteristically reasonable life.

### *The Soul as a Unity.*

It is difficult when speaking of the characteristics of mind or spirit to avoid using misleading metaphors. Most of the conceptions upon which our metaphors are modelled are spatial and material ; they are modelled, that is to say, upon the conception of material things occupying space, and the soul is neither material, nor is it in space. Indeed, the manner of speaking which I have hitherto adopted, according to which the soul is represented as being divided into, or made up of “ parts ” is misleading, for precisely this reason, suggesting as it does that the soul consists of a number of faculties any one of which may, at any given moment, be operative in just the same way as a golf bag contains a number of clubs, any one of which may be temporarily in use. A more appropriate conception is that of a river which may flow along any one of a number of different channels. When the flow of the soul is directed into one channel, we call it rational ; when it fills another, we call it appetitive, when another, emotional, and so on. To put the point more technically, the soul is a unity which may express itself

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at one time in a predominantly rational, at another in a predominantly emotional, at another in a predominantly appetitive manner. Now Plato's three "parts" of the soul are most appropriately to be conceived as levels at any one of which psychological activity can express itself; or, to continue my metaphor, as channels along any one of which the whole stream of psychical energy after the model of which I am conceiving, the soul, may flow. The important feature of this conception is that to each channel there is its appropriate outlet and along each channel flows the energy necessary to reach that outlet. When the activity of the soul is predominantly one of desire, the outlet of the stream is found in the satisfaction of desire; when its activity is predominantly one of reason, the outlet is the pursuit of one of the ends of reason.

This does not mean that the life according to reason is an unemotional or a bloodless life. Reason has its own desires and is accompanied by its own emotions, but they are the desires and emotions appropriate to the ends which reason pursues. When discussing music, in Chapter X.,\* I distinguished the emotion aroused by such music as that of Bach from the emotions aroused by expressive and dramatic music. The former, which I suggested is the emotion proper to music, is aroused by music and not by any of the occurrences, relations or passions of life. In the same way I would now suggest that the emotions aroused by the ends of reason are those proper to reason and are wholly different from those aroused by the ends of passion or desire.

\* See Chapter X., pages 240-241.

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If I am right, we are now in a position to answer the question, "What is meant by a rationally conceived plan of life, in the interests of which we are asked to discipline our passions and subordinate our desires?" A rationally conceived plan of life involves two things : first, a consistent pursuit of the ends appropriate to reason ; secondly, in order that reason may be undisturbed in its pursuit by the solicitations of passion and desire, the subordination of these to reason. Granted that reason can command its own energy ; granted, too, that reason contains an admixture of what we should ordinarily call will, then reason can pursue her own ends with her own energy and use will to keep the passions in their place.

### *The Values as the Ends of Reason.*

What, then, are the ends of reason ? To answer this question would involve an incursion into Plato's metaphysical theory which would take me beyond the limits of this book. Broadly, however, they are the values, goodness, truth and beauty, which Plato believed to be real factors in, or inhabitants of the universe. Of these cosmic elements, which Plato called Forms, it was possible for the human mind to have knowledge. Moreover, Plato believed with Socrates that they exerted a pulling power over the mind that knew them, so that to know was to wish to pursue. Thus a life according to reason is a life which predominantly consists in the pursuit of values. We have already seen that, from the purely hedonistic point of view, a man will secure the greatest degree of satisfaction for his various desires, if

they are harmonized under the control of reason. We may now translate this conclusion into the language of values by saying that the value, happiness, will be most fully realized in a life which is devoted to the pursuit of the other three values. This conclusion accords with the by-product theory of happiness according to which happiness should not be pursued directly, but tends to invest activities directed to the pursuit of ends which are intrinsically worth while.

(ii) *Reason's Recipe for the Control of the Passions.*

We have seen that reason should be asked to prescribe a certain rule for the passions not only in the interests of its achievement of its own particular end, but also in order that the passions themselves may achieve such satisfaction as is possible to them. It remains to inquire what this rule is. The clearest and most convincing answer offered by the Greek philosophers is to be found in Aristotle's doctrine of the Mean, according to which the rule for the control or discipline of desire is to be found in a mean or balance between extremes. Now a mean or balance is a relationship between two or more things. A mean distance, for example, is reached by comparing and averaging a number of distances, some smaller and some greater ; a balance of opposites implies that there are two opposed things which are temporarily held in equilibrium. Right actions, therefore, and right dispositions, if they are also " mean " actions and " mean " dispositions, cannot be determined by themselves ; they can be determined only by reference to the extremes on

either side of them between which they constitute the mean or balance.

Aristotle's doctrine is based, at least in part, upon an analogy between the mind and the body. Too much food or too little, too much exercise or too little, have, it is obvious, a deleterious effect. As with the body, so with the mind. Health of mind, no less than health of body, expresses itself in a habit of acting between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. A courageous action, for example, is a mean between the extremes of timidity and recklessness ; a generous action, between those of meanness and extravagance, while a proper modesty is a mean between grovelling humility and overweening arrogance.

*General Support for the Doctrine of the Mean.*

Advocacy of the doctrine of the Mean as the path to virtue is by no means confined to Aristotle. Of the truth embodied in Aristotle's doctrines popular thinking has indeed always been keenly aware. By such maxims as "Nothing too much," "Enough is as good as a feast," "Wisdom consists in knowing where to stop," it testifies its recognition of the value of the Mean. The following is a typical popular statement of the doctrine from Lord Chesterfield's letters :

"The sure characteristic of a sound and strong mind is to find in everything those certain bounds, *quos ultra citrave nequit consistere rectum*. These boundaries are marked out by a very fine line, which only good sense and attention can discover ; it is

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much too fine for vulgar eyes. In manners, this line is good-breeding ; beyond it, is troublesome ceremony ; short of it, is unbecoming negligence and inattention. In morals, it divides ostentatious puritanism from criminal relaxation ; in religion, superstition from impiety ; and, in short, every virtue from its kindred vice or weakness."

Nor is it only the English and the Greeks who have recommended adherence to the Mean. The doctrine constantly recurs in one form or another in the writings of ethical philosophers of all ages and peoples. The Chinese, for example, are a people to whom a prudent moderation in all things appears to be particularly congenial. It is, therefore, no accident that the doctrine of the Mean figures prominently in Chinese philosophy, being explicitly advocated both by Confucius and by Lao Tse. Of an ideal emperor of the T'ang dynasty, the emperor Shun, Confucius remarked that he "held the Mean," a phrase which he proceeds to develop by saying that the emperor "used to listen to two extremes of counsel and then apply the Mean to the people." Describing Chinese ideals of life, Mr. Lin Yutang\* claims that to live according to the Mean is "the normal and essential way of life."

### *The Greek Doctrine of Harmony.*

The doctrine which I have sketched may seem an inadequate guide to conduct. I should certainly not venture to affirm that it affords a complete guide. It

\* See *My Country and My People*, by Lin Yutang, published 1935.

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should, however, be remembered that for the Greeks the doctrine of the Mean is only a single aspect of a more general doctrine of harmony. All excellence of any kind consisted, they believed, in a harmony between various elements and forces, which were so blended that each contributed to enhance the richness of the whole. In harmony, they maintained, was to be found the excellence of works of architecture, sculpture, or painting. In harmony also lay the secret of bodily health, a harmony between the hot and the cold, the dry and the wet, the dynamic and the lethargic elements in the body. In harmony, finally, consisted the excellence of conduct.

The Greek ideal of goodness differs from the Christian in being at once less negative and more constructive. It is less negative than the Christian in that it lays little stress upon the importance of *not* doing certain things, which is typified by the Christian doctrine of resistance to temptation. It is more constructive in the sense that it sets before the individual an ideal of conduct which, partaking of the nature of aesthetic as much as of moral excellence, bids him achieve a harmony between the claims of reason, desire and emotion. We have already met this all-round conception of excellence in Socrates's account of "the Good." \* The truth is that, in the last resort, the recipe for aesthetic and moral excellence is for the typical Greek (who, it is necessary to add, is very far from being Plato) the same. The good statue, the good body and the good character are all distinguished by a certain right proportion between the different elements of which they are composed. This right pro-

\* See Chapter IX., pages 206-209.



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portion, which is beauty in the case of the statue, and health in that of the body, is moral excellence in that of the character, the essential feature of a good character being a right relation between passion, emotion and desire, on the one hand, and reason on the other. In this relation, as we have seen, all the other elements are subordinated to reason. When this relation is realized, reason is found to prescribe to the passions a rational scheme of life by conforming to which they will achieve as much satisfaction as is possible to them, while reason is left free to pursue the higher values. This right rule of life is conformity to the Mean. Thus the maxim that we should adhere to the Mean is in no sense the expression of an isolated doctrine ; it forms an integral part of a carefully-thought-out scheme of living which seeks to make provision for all sides of our nature.

### SUMMARY

#### *Dependence of the Foregoing Conclusion on the Conclusions of Part I.*

The scheme of living which I have just described has for its foundation a belief in the reality of values, and for its incentive a determination to pursue them. At this point, then, it becomes possible to bring the practical doctrines of this chapter into relation with the metaphysical conclusions of the earlier part of the book and to exhibit the former as a corollary of the latter. If values did not exist and were not real, they would not constitute the ends of human action ; they would not

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therefore, give purpose to the individual's life, afford a guide to his conduct, or provide a justification for the attempt to discipline and dovetail the passions, in order that they might be the better pursued. If there were no values, we should have no warrant for believing one mode of life to be *better* than another. We should be entitled to affirm of it, only that it was *happier*.

Thus in the absence of a belief in values, happiness becomes at once the only test of value and the only legitimate object of pursuit. A life devoted to the direct pursuit of happiness inevitably develops along one or other of two lines ; either towards the satisfaction of desires as and when they present themselves, or in the adoption of some rule of life which seeks to restrain or to postpone the fruition of desires in order that, by restraint and postponement, they may achieve greater satisfaction in the end. Upon the first mode of life I have already commented, or rather, have conveyed the substance of Plato's comments. Only too often it culminates in the setting up of some one tyrant desire which rides the soul and drives it to destruction. If it does not have this result, it yet leaves the soul at the mercy of a sea of conflicting desires to be tossed this way and that without direction and without rest.

The second mode of life assumes a number of different forms. Its most familiar form is illustrated by the prudent calculating man who checks or postpones his desires in the present, in the interests not of some higher end, but of greater satisfaction in the future. He is wise in that he has learnt that desires must not be indiscriminately indulged as and when they occur, but he has not achieved

the further wisdom which recognizes that there is some good other than that to be achieved by the satisfaction of desire, in the interests of which the indulgence of desire must be restrained. And so he restrains now only that he may enjoy the more later. We know him as the cold-blooded sensualist who fasts all day in order that he may more keenly enjoy his dinner at night, drinks in moderation that he may cull yet more exquisite pleasure from his wine, or—to take a more sinister example—postpones the wreaking of immediate vengeance upon a captive enemy in order that he may enjoy the pleasure of observing the pains of his terrified suspense.

*Limitations of the Doctrine of the Mean.*

It may be said that the life of such an one is not far removed from that which a strict adherence to the doctrine of the Mean enjoys. And, indeed, it is not. But the doctrine of the Mean was never intended to prescribe an end; it was put forward with the object of keeping the desires quiet, in order that reason and spirit might not be diverted from their pursuit of higher ends. Considered as an end in itself, the doctrine of the Mean is only hedonism in another and subtler form, and if adopted from this motive as a mode of living, exhibits the unsatisfactory characteristics which we have already had occasion to observe in the life which is devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. The rule of moderation as a means to something higher than the satisfaction of desire is a good rule; but about moderation treated as an end in itself there is something at once cold-blooded and

uninspiring. It implies a somewhat stereotyped, even an old-maidish attitude to life which, pardonable perhaps in the old—the old man, one feels, has shot his bolt and is entitled to ask of life only such small and carefully regulated satisfactions as observance of the doctrine of the Mean affords—is censurable in youth. To stereotype one's activities in such a way as to obtain from each the greatest possible amount of satisfaction which it is capable of giving, may be good advice in the case of smoking, eating or drinking, but I doubt whether it would be found to satisfy the requirements of the moral consciousness in cases in which self-sacrifice, courage, and unselfishness are demanded. A man should not, it might be said, adopt a calculating attitude to virtue, or measure in advance the amount of good which he proposes to do in the world. Youth, moreover, is the time for experiment. A young man should, in common parlance, be ready to "taste any drink once," and there is a natural tendency to think ill of a man of twenty-one who, in his anxiety to avoid risk and maximize pleasure, keeps always in view the middle course which is appropriate to middle-age.

The general conclusion seems to be that the way of life which the doctrine of the Mean advocates can be justified only if it is adopted as a method of training the character to follow a way of life which aspires beyond the Mean. We must, in short, be moderate in our pleasures in order that we may the more effectively pursue something other than our pleasures ; pursue, in other words, that which is worth while in and for itself. This "something other" can only be the values, for it is only, as I

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have insisted, by reference to the standard of the values that the notion of worth-whileness in and for itself has meaning. We thus reach a further general conclusion which may be stated as follows.

It is only if we are prepared to accept the existence of a reality other than that of the world of every day, that we can discover a principle to guide our conduct in the world of every day. Thus, as I pointed out at the beginning of this summary, the metaphysical doctrine of which affirms that values are real is a necessary foundation for any ethical doctrine which seeks to prescribe a right rule of life.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS (II.) IN POLITICS. STATE ABSOLUTISM, ITS REFUTATION AND SOME CONSEQUENCES

#### (A) THE PHILOSOPHY OF STATE ABSOLUTISM

“The existence of the State is the movement of God in the world. It is the absolute power on earth ; it is its own end and object.”—HEGEL.

“Man is only free in and through the whole ; the whole can only be a sovereign State which tolerates no discussion and no control.”—MUSSOLINI.

I have put these two quotations at the head of this chapter because they announce in the clearest possible way the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty, nay more, of the divinity of the State which dominates half the continent of Europe to-day.

#### *Common-Sense View of the State.*

On the face of it the doctrine is a monstrous perversion. The State, one would have thought, was made by men to serve their purposes and further their ends ; it is, one would have said, in essence nothing but a piece of social machinery like a sanitary system or an arterial

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road, which has been devised to enable human beings to transact their common business. This being so, it is, one would have further supposed, nothing apart from the individuals who compose it ; it has no purpose save such as is realized, no value, save such as is embodied in the lives of its citizens, and its justification lies in its ability to establish those conditions, spiritual as well as physical, in which individuals can develop their personalities and achieve such happiness as belongs to their natures. The State, in a word, is made for man, not man for the State.

All this seems plain common sense. How comes it, then, that we find men attributing to the State a being or personality of its own, claiming for it an importance greater than that of the men and women who compose it, and endowing it with rights which transcend their rights, endowing it, above all, with the right to exact the most horrible sacrifices from its citizens in order that it may harm the members of another State whenever it deems the moment suitable.

### *The Social Nature of Man.*

The doctrine of the omnipotence of the State derives, as do most modern doctrines, from the Greeks. Plato and Aristotle affirmed the social nature of man. The human being, isolated from society is, they urged, something less than human precisely because his social nature remains undeveloped. Take, for example, the case of a hypothetical Robinson Crusoe, living from birth in solitude upon his island. He grows up with nobody to

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lie to, nobody to steal from, nobody to betray, nobody to make use of for his own convenience, nobody to be responsible for, and by consequence, therefore, with no chance of being truthful, honest, trustworthy, unselfish and reliable. In his life there are no self-sacrifice, no loyalty, no feeling for others, no power of getting on with others. Is it not clear that such an one, growing up, as he must do, with character undeveloped and social potentialities unused, is maimed and aborted in respect of some at least of his human attributes? Full human stature, in other words, can only be reached in a society where intercourse with his fellows develops a man's social and moral self. It follows that it is only by living in society that a man can realize all that he has in him to be, only by fulfilling his social obligations that he can develop his full nature. Besides, therefore, the obvious benefits of security from violence and redress against injustice that the individual receives from the State, he owes to it the fact of his own individuality, deriving from it, at least in part, the substance of his own being. It is to the State, in short, that he owes the fact that he is what he is.

### *The Doctrine of the General Will.*

With this Greek view of the social nature of man there is combined another doctrine which was first put forward by the eighteenth-century philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau. This is the doctrine of the General Will. Let us suppose that eight people are sitting on a committee and considering a controversial measure.



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Three of them want to follow course A, three course B, and two course C. As there is no clear majority for any of these courses, neither A, B, nor C is in fact adopted, but a course different from all three, which we will call X. X, we should say, represents a compromise between all the different points of view. Yet X clearly is not willed by any single individual. Yet X clearly *is* willed, since otherwise the course which it represents could not have been followed. By whom, then, is it willed? The only answer seems to be, by the committee. Hence arises the suggestion that the committee has a will of its own which must be regarded as being something which is over and above the separate wills of its separate members taken severally. Rousseau added two further considerations. There must, he pointed out, always be a course which it is *right* for the committee to follow, even if no single member *wills* this course. What is more, when the members are seeking to advance their own individual or sectional interests, they are willing, as Rousseau would say, personally or sectionally; they are not, that is to say, willing what is right or best for the whole, but only what is advantageous to them. Willing as individuals, then, they will self-interestedly; willing as members of the whole, they will disinterestedly. Thus the will of the committee taken as a whole is not only something which is over and above the sum total of the wills of each member taken separately, it is something which is disinterested and, therefore, right, as compared with their separate wills which are self-interested and, therefore, wrong. Thus the will of the whole which Rousseau calls the General Will, being morally superior to that of the wills

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of the citizens, ought to take precedence over and be expressed in preference to theirs.

The final step in this line of thought was taken by Hegel. There cannot, he maintained, be a will without a being to have it. Since we have shown that a body of persons may have a will of its own, that body must have a personality of its own. Since the will of the body, as a whole, is right and disinterested as compared with the individual wills of its members which are personal and selfish, the personality of the whole is more moral than the personalities of its parts, and should take precedence over them.

### *The Analogy between Body Politic and Living Organism.*

Let us now transfer the argument from the committee to the State. The State, we shall say, has a being or personality of its own, possessed of a will which is different from and more important than the wills of all its members taken separately and which ought, therefore, to take precedence over theirs. What, then, is its relation to its members? Precisely that of a living organism to its parts. Two features of this relationship are in this connection important. First, the living organism is more than the sum total of the limbs and organs, the nerves, blood, bones, and brain which, taken together, compose it. Precisely because it *is* more, we should realize the absurdity of saying that the lungs have rights of their own as against the body as a whole; or that the stomach or the heart has any purpose or end, save such as contributes to the well-being of the whole.

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Secondly, the living organism not only transcends, but informs all its members ; that is to say, the personality of the whole pervades and determines everything that any part of it does. Thus, what I do is different from what you do precisely because and in so far as my actions express my personality and your actions express yours ; and what is true of my actions is also true of my demeanour, of the tone of my voice, the movements of my limbs, and so on. Thus instead of thinking of the various organs and parts of the body as coming together to make the living organism, we are asked to conceive of the organism as a whole which precedes and pervades the parts ; instead of regarding my separate actions as making up my personality or character, we are asked to think of my personality as expressing itself in my actions. Now let us transfer the analogy to the State. The State, it is argued, is not just the sum total of its citizens ; it is a being possessed of a personality which transcends and informs theirs, pervading their natures and expressing itself, therefore, in their actions. They are not separate and discrete individuals with ends and purposes of their own, any more than the heart is a separate organ with ends and purposes independent of those of the body. They, like the bodily organs, belong to a whole, which both transcends and is immanent in them.

### *The Doctrine of Totalitarianism.*

We are now in sight of the fully developed principle of Totalitarianism. This principle affirms that the life

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and being of the citizens are rooted in the State, just as the life and being of the cells are rooted in the living body. The State is, accordingly, credited with the right to direct, control and regulate every manifestation, not only of the individual's activity, but of the groups of individuals which may be formed within the State for special purposes, for politics or religion, for sport or even for art. "The revolution will be at an end," a leader in the German paper, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, declared in 1933, "once we possess the whole State. There must be no party, no organization besides our own."

Illustrations of the workings of this principle are daily provided by the contemporary totalitarian States. Thus a football team in Italy is never merely a football team ; it is an expression of the spirit, an extension of the being of the State. Football matches with foreign teams are accordingly treated as matters of national prestige. Victory is hailed as a triumph over the enemy, a testimony to national virtue and a sign of racial superiority ; defeat is attributed to foul play and regarded as a *casus belli*. Sportsmen are regarded as having the honour of the nation in their keeping. Thus when in 1936 the Naples Football Club lost a European cup, it was perfectly logical on totalitarian principles for the State to punish the players by fining them £25 each. (The captain incidentally was fined £40.)

It is on the same principle that trade unions conceived as independent organizations, owing allegiance to a movement which is internationally rather than nationally organized, are regarded as excrescences upon the body of the State. The destruction of the independent labour

movement in Germany after the successful Nazi revolution was, therefore, a perfectly logical expression of the underlying theory. "Why do we require a Labour Party?" the leader already quoted continues—"We ourselves are the Labour Party. Why do we require national parties? We ourselves are a national party. Why the need for Marxist or Christian trade union leaders?" As with the labour movement, so with the Jews; they, too, owed allegiance to an organization—international Jewry—which extended beyond the bounds of the Nation-State. Because of this extra-State allegiance, it was argued that, however keenly they might desire to be good Germans, the whole of their being could never be absorbed in and exhausted by the duties and interests of good Germans. The Jews, then, were also treated as an excrescence and were cut out of the body of the State.

The Nazi quarrel with the Roman Catholics and with the Confessional Church springs from the same source. It is because the Christian owns an allegiance to a power which is other than and additional to that of the State; it is because the Catholic acknowledges the authority of the Pope, which is not the State's authority, and the strict Lutheran claims the right to hearken to the voice of his conscience, which may not be the State's voice, that Catholics and Lutherans are the objects of persecution.

## CRITICISM OF STATE ABSOLUTISM

### (B) CRITICISM OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ABSOLUTIST STATE

#### *Preliminary Comment.*

To me the theory whose outlines I have sketched seems to involve the most monstrous perversion of values. In making the State into a god, the determiner of the individual's life and the innermost reality of his being, it takes from him the right to make his own gods, to determine his own life, to develop his own being ; takes from him, therefore, the right to live the good life in the form in which it seems good to him ; takes from him, finally, the right to pursue values. Instead, it imposes upon him its own values which, in the case of the modern State, are political power and military prestige achieved through the successful use of force. Almost, it might be said, that the theory of the State *compels* men to pursue false values.

Fortunately, the criticisms to which the theory is exposed amount in sum to a reasonably convincing refutation, which convict the theory of being as false in point of truth as it is monstrous in point of morals. I have attempted elsewhere\* to set out these criticisms in detail, and I do not propose to cover the same ground again here. I shall confine myself to one matter only which has a special reference to the theme of this book ; that is to say, to the analogy between the living organism and its members, and the State and its individual citizens, upon which, as we have seen, the theory in large part relies. This analogy is misleading.

\* See my *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics*, chapter xviii.

*Criticism of the Analogy between the Body Politic and the Living Organism.*

It may be admitted that a society is in certain respects a whole which is more than the arithmetical sum total of its individual members, and that in these respects, therefore, it resembles the wholes, whose significance I have described in Chapter VI.,\* more closely than it resembles an aggregate. In so far as it may appropriately be regarded as a whole, we may justifiably ask of it, what are *its* intentions, what is *its* policy, what is the mode of life *it* encourages?—the word “it” which occurs in these questions being taken to imply not merely the aggregate sum of all the individual citizens taken separately but a unity which, in some sense not easy to define, is brought into being by their aggregation. This unity is what we know as society.

But, having admitted so much, we must proceed to point out important differences between a State and a living body. First, the organs of the human body have admittedly no rights of their own and no ends of their own. The individual members of the State have both individual rights and individual ends. Secondly, the organs of the human body have no purposes apart from the whole, for their sole purpose is to contribute to the well-being of the whole. But society has no purpose save such as is realized in the lives of its members.

Thirdly, while the organs of the human body have no life outside the human body, but derive their life from

\* See Chapter VI., pages 144-146.

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that to which they belong, the members of a society can and do have life and interests apart from it, whereas society has no life and interests apart from those of its members. Society, in fact, subsists in the wills, the desires, the sympathies and the thoughts of the men whom it knits together. It is constituted by comradeship in work, by fellowship in purpose and in hope, by general inheritance of thought; in other words, by a common life and by the social consciousness in and through which men become aware of the common life.

Again, society only comes into existence through the association of its members. Even if Plato and Aristotle were right in affirming the essentially social character of man; even if, as anthropologists affirm, there was never a time since man appeared upon this planet when human beings did not live together in society, it is, nevertheless, true that individuals do in an important sense come first and society second. Individuals can and do live outside society—there are Robinson Crusoes, hermits, ascetics, and solitary personages who do yet contrive to live—but a society is logically inconceivable without members. While, however, individuals logically precede the society that they form, it is nonsense to say that the organs of a human body precede the body. The organs of the body and the body logically entail each other in precisely the same sense as the sides and angles of a triangle and the triangle logically entail each other.

Finally, while it may be conceded that society is a whole which is in a certain sense more than the sum of its members, it should be noted that the whole is never complete. Some societies are more integrated than others.



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In an imperfectly integrated society some parts may wish to secede and to form societies on their own ; others will refuse to recognize themselves as members of the society ; others, again, from whom recognition of membership is enforced may, like the ex-German inhabitants of the Italian Tyrol, still cling to the customs, ways of life and language appropriate to some other society from which they have been forcibly separated. But there are not various degrees of wholeness in a body.

All these considerations point to the same conclusion, which is that the wholeness of a human body is at once different in kind from, and more complete in degree than, the wholeness of a society. The rights of a human body in relation to its organs are more clearly established and better founded than those of a society in relation to its individual members. Hence there is justification for the pursuit and realization of the ends of a human body at the cost of sacrifice on the part of its organs, as when an inflamed appendix may be removed in the interests of general health, which does not exist in the case of a society which claims to pursue ends that entail sacrifices on the part of its members.

*A Glance at some other Lines of Criticism. That the State is not Ultimate, but will be Superseded.*

I am, it will be remembered, proposing strictly to confine myself to one only of the many lines of criticism to which the absolutist theory of the State is exposed. I could have criticized the theory of the General Will, asked in what sense the policy pursued by a State can

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be considered to express the views of a minority when the policy represents a course of action to which the minority is opposed, or demanded why, if the State has a personality which transcends and informs the personalities of all its individual members, other organizations cannot be shown by the same arguments also to have personalities of their own which transcend and inform the personalities of their members, and why, therefore, they too may not claim the right to determine the ends and purposes of their members? Why, in other words, may not the church, the club, the guild, or the trade union put forward the same pretensions as the State? There is, after all, nothing sacrosanct, there is nothing even peculiar about that form of organization which we call the State. It crystallizes out as a distinct political unit comparatively late in history, and it may well be superseded—so at least we are entitled to hope—at a not-too-distant date. The State is in fact but a single link in a chain of development which begins with the single-celled organism, proceeds to the development of multi-cellular organisms, of which human beings are examples, continues through the union of one multi-cellular organism with another to form the family, and then runs through the union of family with family to make tribe, of tribe with tribe to make canton, of canton with canton to make province, until finally the stage is reached at which province unites with province to make the Nation-State. It is reasonably certain that the process which has produced the State will continue until the State is itself superseded by some kind of Federal Union, or super-State. If this, the next stage of develop-

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ment, is not achieved by our own civilization, then it will go the way of its predecessors through its failure to solve the problems of organization which the increase in its power due to its own inventiveness have set it, while our species, so destructive are we grown, may disappear and leave its name upon the records of planetary history as just the last and cleverest of the great apes.

### *The Growth of Organizations which Ignore or Transcend the State.*

I might further have drawn attention to the fact that there exist already in the world organizations, for example the Roman Catholic Church or the various Workers' Internationals, which cut right across the boundaries of the Nation-State. It may well be that I belong to such an organization. Why, then, when the claims of this organization conflict, as they sometimes do, with those of the State, should I necessarily and automatically give heed to the latter? Why, to take a particular case, if I am a member of a Christian Church which happens to take Christ's teaching on the subject of non-resistance seriously, should I declare myself willing to kill fellow-members of my species, whom I have never seen, whenever the State to which I happen to belong deems the mass slaughter of the citizens of some other State to be in its interests? Considerations and interrogations of this type culminate in the question, with what right does the State arrogate to itself the enormous importance in the life of the individual with which the theory we are criticizing invests it? The State is, after all, the only

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organization which, of all those to which we belong, we do not join by choice. We *voluntarily* choose to belong to a club, to a trade union, or a church because it ministers to our entertainment, offers to fill our pocket, furthers our interests or comforts and assures our spirit ; but we belong to a particular State not by our own will or act, but merely because we happen to have been born in a particular bedroom.

All this ground and more I might have traversed, not only developing at length the implications of the points at which I have so briefly glanced, but marshalling other objections and difficulties to which I have not even referred. I omit these criticisms here, partly for the reason already given, that I have detailed them at length elsewhere, partly because my present concern is to stress the fallaciousness of one only among the many false claims embodied in the theory, the claim, namely, that the State is a being possessed of a personality of its own, endowed with rights which transcend in importance those of the individuals who compose it.

### *Some Philosophical Conclusions which follow from the Criticism of the Absolutist Theory.*

If the State has not a being or personality of its own, certain important conclusions follow.

(i) The State has no will of its own, because a will can belong only to a person.

(ii) The State has no interests other than the interests of the individuals who compose it.

(iii) The State can have no ends save such as seem

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good to the individuals who compose it. Thus the worth of the State will depend upon the nature of the ends which its members pursue. A good State will be one of which all or most of the members follow good modes of life ; a bad State will be one of which all or most of the members live bad lives.

(iv) Since only minds, or rather persons, can appreciate and pursue values, the State cannot pursue value, nor can the State be an embodiment of any value.

### (C) SOME POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES WHICH FOLLOW FROM THE REJECTION OF THE ABSOLUTIST THEORY

*That You cannot improve Men's Morals or add to their Wisdom  
by Act of Parliament.*

We are now in a position to draw two important political conclusions.

(1) First, if there is no good for the State apart from the good of the individuals who compose it, the excellence of the State must be assessed by one standard only, namely, by the standard of its ability to promote the good life for its members. To promote, but not to prescribe. The distinction is important, and I must pause for a moment to enlarge on it. The Greek philosophers tended to think that there were two or at most three kinds of good life ; that all individuals could be expected to pursue one or other of these kinds of life according to their status and talents ; and that it was the business of the State to see that each man pursued the kind of good life appropriate to him. As a result of the liberal traditions established during the last 150 years, we have

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come to realize that there are many different kinds of good life, or, to use the language adopted in this book, that men may pursue different values, one man truth, another beauty, another holiness, and that they may pursue them in different ways—the mystic, for example, striving to grasp the truth of the spiritual world by contemplation and meditation, the scientist seeking the truth of the physical world by experiment and formulation of the results of experiment—and that freedom and spontaneity of choice are themselves of the greatest value. You cannot, we should now be inclined to say, force men to be good by Act of Parliament ; and even if you could, it would not be to goodness that you would force them, for their compulsory virtue would have been deprived of merit by reason of the fact that it was compulsory. Nor can you impose wisdom by making laws. No doubt you can cause people to act wisely, through fear of the consequences if they transgress the code of conduct which the law has laid down. But the fact that they had not *chosen* their conduct for themselves would mean that their wisdom was not that of men, but of sheep ; in other words, it would not be wisdom at all, but only a uniform timidity. There is another reason of the first importance why individual initiative must not be cramped by legislative enactment. It is this ; in both spheres, in that of goodness no less than in that of truth, it is to the initiative of individual men and women that we owe those advances in insight which distinguish the civilized from the savage condition.

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State promotes the good life by maintaining the background of conditions in which alone the good life can be lived. What are these conditions? Security against violence, an economic competence, a reasonably high standard of education, and the opportunity to develop to the full the potentialities of one's nature. Our first conclusion is, then, that the function of the State is to establish this minimum background of the good life rather than to prescribe its nature by seeking to fill its foreground.

*That the Constitution of the State must be that of a Democracy.*

(2) It follows—and here we come to our second political conclusion—that the constitution of the State must be that of a democracy; if the State is not to *impose* certain modes of life upon its citizens, this second corollary follows of necessity. For, unless the citizens control the State so that it is with them, in the last resort, and only with them that the power to determine what sort of State it shall be and how it shall be governed rests, they will have no means of withstanding, and no right to withstand, the State's claim to prescribe to them how they shall live, at what altars they shall worship, by what criteria they shall estimate the worth of conduct, and what values they shall honour. History shows with what frequency non-democratic governments have put forward precisely such claims, and with what success they have made their claims good. To take two examples, most governments in the Christian era have sought not only to prescribe for their subjects a particular kind of

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religion, but to impose upon them particular modes of worship, and particular forms of ritual out of the many varieties to be found within the bounds of that religion. Thus men have been required by their governments to adopt a particular view as to whether the bread and wine used in the Communion service become or only symbolize the body and blood of Christ. Because men have refused to adopt the government's view in regard to this highly controversial matter, they have been persecuted and murdered. Thus Catholic States have burnt Protestants, and Protestant States have burnt Catholics.

### *Codes of Conduct and Scales of Valuation imposed by Non-Democratic States.*

To-day most non-democratic States and some democratic ones seek to impose upon their citizens a particular criterion of moral and political virtue. According to this criterion the good man is he who trains himself to slaughter the State's enemies, and is willing to exhibit his skill in murder whenever the State thinks the moment expedient ; the good woman, she who provides many sons to make good men. "A new world has come into being," proclaims an article in *Deutsche Wehr*, the professional journal of Hitler's Officer-Corps, "for which war is frankly a postulate, the measure of all things, and in which the soldier lays down the law and rules the roost. . . . Every human and social activity is justified only when it aids preparation for war." As for women, Hitler himself has said, "There is no higher or finer privilege for a woman than that of sending her children to war."



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To this conception of moral virtue, to this scale of values every citizen of a modern non-democratic State must subscribe. "I am ordering you now," declared the Reich Stadthalter of Thuringia at the Nazi District Conference in 1933, "to be intolerant with everything else. In future there must be in Thuringia one political faith only. . . . The Nazis claim the right to be intolerant in view of the necessity for uniform thinking and acting in the nation as a whole." "Since Hitler has been presented to us by God," Bishop Dietrich has affirmed, "those who do not place themselves at his side are evil-doers."

These examples will serve to illustrate the truth of the contention that under a dictatorial government the citizen is deprived of the right of determining the good life for himself by choosing what ends he shall pursue, what criteria of conduct he shall invoke, and what values he shall honour.

### *Plato's Form of Totalitarianism.*

Even if the mode of life and the scale of valuation prescribed by the State were such as are wise and good, it may be doubted whether they are not robbed of value by the very fact of being prescribed.

Plato constructed an authoritarian State whose rulers prescribed a code of laws and a scale of values and devised an elaborate system of education to secure acceptance of the code and adherence to the scale. He took immense pains to ensure that the code and the scale should be as nearly perfect as human wisdom,

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engaged in drawing up on paper without let or hindrance from reality, the model of the ideal State, could make them. They were in fact conceived in the light of the rulers' knowledge of the values, and represent the pattern of the values embodied in the structure and organization of society. In the laws and education of Plato's State the ideal forms\* are brought down from heaven to earth. Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether even under these ideal conditions—and how rarely, if ever, will such conditions actually obtain?—it is desirable that people should be constrained, even if they are constrained into virtue. Human nature is a loose, untidy form of growth, and it cannot without discomfort be accommodated within the strait-jacket of legislative perfection. It may be, in fact it is, the case that people who are imperfect are better suited by imperfect laws which provide for their idiosyncrasies, make allowance for their weaknesses and reflect their needs, than by perfect ones which presuppose the ability to conform to a standard of behaviour which outruns their capacity. In any event, people must in the last resort be allowed to determine for themselves by what principles the society in which they live is to be governed, even if, owing to their inexperience and folly, they make a worse job of running society than Plato's philosophers would have done. For it is better to be free to go wrong than to be compelled to go right.

*Practical Corollary. The Fundamental Principle of Democracy.*

These political conclusions may be summed up in the principle, which I take to be the fundamental principle

\* See Chapter XII., page 297.

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of democracy, that "it is only the wearer who knows where the shoe pinches." In other words those who have to obey the laws should in the last resort be those who are responsible for the laws which they have to obey.

Two quotations from John Stuart Mill's great work *Liberty* will summarize the conclusions of the line of thought I have been following better than I could hope to do. "Mankind," he wrote, "are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest"; for "the only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it." This is not to say that there is no danger that the majority in a democracy will tyrannize over the minority; many democracies have been in fact tyrannical; but except there be democracy, there is little hope of avoiding tyranny, and should tyranny arise, there is no remedy save that of revolt.

### *Summary.*

It will be convenient to summarize the conclusions in which our criticisms of the absolutist theory of the State have issued.

(1) Ethics and politics are two aspects of a single inquiry. It is the business of ethics to discover wherein the good life for the individual consists, of politics to determine the nature of the community in which the good life as revealed by ethics can best be lived. The art of politics is not, then, an end in itself; its concern is

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with the instrument for the achievement of an end beyond itself. The instrument is political, the State ; the end ethical, the good for man. We must, therefore, judge the State not by some standard of values peculiar to and distinctive of the State, valuing a State because *it* is great or glorious or powerful or united or wealthy, but by the standard of the quality of the lives lived by its citizens. If this quality is high, then the State is a good State ; if not, not. But while it is true that politics is a means to the achievement of an ethical end, it is also true, since man is a social being, that this end can be realized only in a social environment. To determine the best environment is the business of political theory ; to establish it that of political practice.

(2) The environment, within which alone the good life, as the individual freely conceives it, can be lived, must be that of a democracy. For the business of the State is not to prescribe the good life ; it is to establish the conditions in which the individual can choose and effectively follow the life that seems good to him.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WHAT MAKES A STATE GREAT?

ONE more question remains for consideration to complete our survey of politics. What, we want to know, in the light of the conclusions reached in this book, constitutes the virtue of a State ; or, to put it more precisely, by reference to what scale of values is political excellence to be measured ? Or again, since some States are judged by historians to be better than others, what should the standard of judgment be ? We have two clues to guide us. We have seen that the excellence of the State must be sought in the lives of its citizens, and we have seen that the citizens must in the last resort themselves determine the nature of the State to which they belong.

When we ask the question, in what does the excellence of the State consist, we find that a bewildering variety of answers is suggested. Let us briefly consider some of the candidates for the rôle of the praiseworthy or excellent State.

*Suggested Criteria of National Excellence. (1) Imperial Power.*

There is, first, the State which owns an empire. Ancient Rome was accounted a great State for this reason, and so is modern Britain.

In so far as the State holds its empire by force and

rules over unwilling subjects, the possession of empire cannot be regarded as a sign of excellence. For to impose your will by virtue of superior force upon those who wish to be free is not ethically admirable. In so far as the empire subsists by virtue of the willing acquiescence of its subjects, the case is different. We must then judge the rule of the governing power by reference to its effect upon the subjects. If the effects are beneficial, the empire is praiseworthy, if not, not. In what terms shall we envisage a beneficial effect? The answer usually given is that it must be envisaged in concrete terms. If the effects of imperial rule can be observed in the concrete forms of bridges, roads, railways, sanitation, irrigation, factories, and so forth, then the rule is regarded as being beneficial. And beneficial, indeed, it is on one condition, and that is that the *subjects benefit from* the effects. The condition is important, since only too often ruling countries have "developed" their subject territories in order that these territories might be a source of greater income to themselves. Rome "developed" with this object, and so does Britain. The average daily wage of the Indian agricultural labourer varies between 6d. and 1s. 1d. a day; the average daily wage of Indian factory workers between 10d. and 1s. 9d. a day. The average working day in the mills of Bombay is reported to be 12 hours; women work for this length of time, and so do children. It is, then, relevant to ask whether the condition of the great mass of Indians is really better, judged by the standard of concrete tangible benefits, by reason of the fact that India forms part of the Empire, than it would otherwise be.

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I emphasize the point because it serves to throw into relief the conclusion that the fact of ruling is not in itself a good thing or a bad. Whether it is good or bad depends upon the results which the rule is designed to achieve, and upon the results which it does achieve. Even if these results include greater wealth and greater leisure for the subjects ruled over—and it is rarely that this has been the case—leisure and wealth cannot, as we have seen,\* be regarded as goods in themselves. They are goods only if they are used as a means to those ends which *are* good in themselves ; used, that is to say, in order to facilitate the pursuit of value.

There is little evidence that such leisure and wealth as have accrued to the subjects of an empire have been utilized for this purpose, or that ruling countries have sought deliberately to produce an attitude of mind in their subjects which was favourable to such use.

### *The Temptation of Power.*

While the goods of empire are doubtful and infrequently realized, the possessing and ruling of an empire is attended by one evil which is both clear and frequent. This is the evil of power. While the working classes in an imperial country derive little benefit from the possession of empire—what consolation, it may be asked, is it to an unemployed man, or to a miner sweating in the bowels of the earth, to reflect that a considerable part of the earth's surface south of the Equator appears red upon the map ?—the ruling classes are placed in positions in

\* See Chapter IX., pages 213-215.

which the lives and happiness of many human beings are dependent upon their fiat. They are thus peculiarly exposed to the temptation of power. The appetite for power is, as Plato has pointed out, one of the most devouring of human appetites and grows most with what it feeds on. A man begins by exercising his power for the good of those who are his subjects ; he continues to exercise it for the pleasure that the exercise gives him. The harm for which the love of power is responsible has never been more plainly demonstrated than in the modern world. The leaders of contemporary Europe are obsessed with power. The fact that power, whether over nature or over man, enables them to do something that nobody else has been enabled to do is, for them, a sufficient reason for doing it. It is not power in itself that is bad, but power loved *for* itself. Yet this love of power is precisely the temptation to which the wielder of power is exposed. Desiring power first as an instrument for the achievement of other ends, he falls in love with and retains it as an end in itself. It is possible that the rulers of the modern world may once have sought wise ends, but the man who has drunk of the draught of power loses his wisdom and, forgetful of the end which power should have achieved, dictates for the sake of dictating. So long as such men rule, the peace and beauty of life will continue to diminish. Reflecting upon imperial greatness as a suggested criterion of excellence, it is difficult to refrain from again quoting Lord Acton's verdict upon history, "All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. . . . All great men are bad."



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We cannot, then, conclude that the possession of a great empire is a necessary element in the excellence of States.

### *Suggested Criteria of National Excellence. (2) Military Greatness.*

I turn to military efficiency. States are frequently honoured by historians and others in proportion as they possess powerful armies and navies, and they themselves honour their generals and admirals. The standard of military greatness is, indeed, perhaps the commonest of all those that are invoked by historians and politicians when estimating the worth of States. It is difficult to understand why. Military greatness means nothing more nor less than the possession of efficiency in slaughter, and because of one's known efficiency in this respect, being in a position to impose one's will upon other nations.

Those who value military efficiency make great play with the word "prestige." Upon what, then, does the prestige of a country, in their view, rest? Upon its humanity, its truth-telling, its friendship for the weak, its care for its citizens, its fidelity to its alliances? Upon none of these things. It depends—here is Earl Baldwin's word for it—upon whether "a country has behind it the strength to command respect and attention." It depends, that is to say, in the modern world upon its possession of a sufficient number of aeroplanes to drop bombs that blind and burn and mutilate and shatter upon defenceless people, and a sufficient number of young men who are

willing to drop them with a view to producing these effects. Prestige in fact is nothing more than the power of the bully to impose his will upon others by threatening to destroy them, unless they submit ; it is, in a word, the power of blackmail. Not, one would have thought, a very winsome attribute, this prestige, or one which is pre-eminently in consonance with the tenets of the religion of Christ in which modern civilized nations profess to believe? For my part, I should regard the possession of prestige as disqualifying a State from being considered civilized, exactly in proportion to the amount of prestige it possesses.

As for the generals and the admirals, it is of course the case that in most of the capitals of Europe the highest monuments are reserved for the statues of those who have been most successful in organizing large-scale slaughter, and that the monuments to such men are no less frequent than they are high. Yet apart from the considerations just urged, it may be doubted whether, even in terms of the values which the honouring of generals and admirals implies, that is to say, military prestige resulting from skill in the organization of slaughter, the possession of the military genius is really of advantage to a State. History shows that aggressive militarism has always ruined sooner or later the nation that practised it. Unable to control their incurably mischievous aggressiveness, the Greek States decimated themselves and their neighbours in a continuously recurrent series of wars until, through failure to unite before a common foe, they fell under the domination of Macedon. Belligerent African tribes have been wiped out by the conquering whites, while their

less belligerent neighbours have survived. The most militarily successful phases of Carthaginian history preceded the utter destruction of Carthage, and Hannibal, the greatest military genius that Carthage produced, was the architect of that destruction. All through history, militarily successful and energetically aggressive peoples, especially if led by men of genius, have under-estimated their enemies, have deluded themselves with myths of short, decisive wars ending in victory, have failed to make due allowance for the factor of time, have, indeed, gone from blunder to blunder with such persistence and unanimity that, if history is read realistically, the production of a military genius is one of the greatest disasters that can happen to a people.

Napoleon, for example, was a disaster to France. He reduced the number of Frenchmen, diminished their stature, and loaded them with debts. He brought loneliness and misery to many women, and gross physical agony to many men. Why, then, should the ability to produce a Napoleon or any number of Napoleons be accounted a merit in a State? The answer is not clear.

*Suggested Criteria of National Excellence. (3) Wealth.*

Sometimes a State is considered great because of the wealth of its citizens. It is upon wealth that the alleged claim to greatness of our own country chiefly rests. For centuries England has been dominated by the gospel of acquisition. "Money talks," and the desire for it, has for two hundred years past been a greater spur to effort than all other incentives added together. For money buys

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possessions, and by the number and grandeur of his possessions a man's merit is chiefly estimated. Politics, literature, the cinema, the radio, even on occasion the pulpit, have poured forth year after year a stream of propaganda devoted to convincing their readers and seers and listeners that a society in which the acquisitive is the most highly developed of the instincts is a civilized society. The worship of money assorts oddly with our profession of a religion which assures us not only that poverty is good and riches are evil, but that a rich man has as poor a chance of eternal happiness as the poor man has a good one. Nevertheless, though the dictates of prudence no less than the exhortations of religion unite in recommending poverty to those who would serve God and go to heaven, people have shown no disposition to act as if the exhortations of religion were true, and have been willing and eager to barter their chance of celestial bliss in the future for a sufficiency of worldly goods in the present. Perhaps they have believed that they could make the best of both worlds, and by the timeliness of a death-bed repentance, secure for themselves as much consideration in the next world as their bank balances have obtained for them in this one. Implicitly their view would seem to be that expressed by Samuel Butler in his Notebooks : " It is all very well for mischievous writers to maintain that we cannot serve God and Mammon. Granted that it is not easy, but nothing that is worth doing is ever easy."

Whatever we may be in theory, most of us demonstrate by our practice that we are convinced Butlerians. So strong indeed is our addiction to wealth, so confirmed

our belief that it is wealth which, above all other things, confers merit upon a man and greatness upon a State, that it has succeeded in inspiring two theories of the greatest historical importance with regard to the nature of the motive force which makes the wheels of the world go round. One of these, *laissez faire* economics, dominated the nineteenth century. It asserted that men would always act in the way which they considered would conduce to their greatest economic advantage ; that, in short, they were inspired by a hedonism not of the passions, but of the pocket. The other, which bids fair to dominate the early part of the twentieth century, is Marx's theory of economic determinism, which insists that the way in which, at any given moment, a society organizes its economic system to satisfy its material needs, determines its art, its ethics, its religion, and even its logic, no less than its form of government. Both these theories derive their great plausibility from the value which men and women demonstrably place upon wealth as a criterion of merit in individuals and a sign of greatness in States.

### *The Importance of Distribution.*

I have two comments to make upon the proposal that *money* should be accepted as a criterion of social value. First, if it is indeed a criterion of social value, then few men can be considered to be valuable ; for while few men in any society have been possessed of money, most men have been almost completely destitute of it. Contemporary England is adjudged one of the richest countries

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in the world ; it is, indeed, doubtful whether any other country has at any time been so rich. Yet 80 per cent. of the capital of the country is owned by 6 per cent. of the population ; 17,600,000 out of the 20,000,000 persons who receive incomes in Great Britain, in other words, about 9 wage-earners out of every 10, draw less than £250 per annum, and 12,000,000 of these 17,600,000 an income barely above subsistence level, with the result that nearly half the people of this country are undernourished. Thus according to the report of Sir John Orr, published in 1938, 22,500,000 persons in England and Wales are living on a diet which is below the minimum standard for health, while 4,500,000 are living on a weekly income of 10s. per head, of which only 4s. is spent on food.

I conclude that, if the wealth of its inhabitants is to be regarded as a criterion of national greatness, then England cannot be considered to be a great country, and by this standard other countries make an even worse showing than England.

Secondly, for the reasons given on page 215, it does not seem possible to accept money, even if it were evenly distributed, as a satisfactory standard of value. The possession of money is, as I have already pointed out, in itself neither a good thing nor a bad. Money is rendered either good or bad by the use to which we put it. In fact, as we have seen, those who have most of it know so little how to use it, that they live their lives in unblissful ignorance of the values of truth and beauty, while the value of happiness which they do recognize evades the folly of their direct pursuit of it. It is the possession of money that chiefly enables them to commit this folly.

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Money, then, may be a necessary instrument for the achievement of greatness, but it is not itself a sign of greatness.

*Suggested Criteria of National Excellence. (4) Democracy and Liberty.*

I propose next to consider two of the political goods valued by liberals, reformers, and advanced thinkers in all ages and among all peoples, namely, liberty and democracy. That democracy is an essential element in political excellence I have already argued. I should describe it as a political good. Liberty is also a political good. By "a political good" I mean one which is an essential condition of the realization by the citizens of a State of those more ultimate goods which I have identified with the values. In this sense all political goods may be described as instrumental ; instrumental, that is to say, to the achievement of goods which lie beyond the realm of politics, but which yet cannot be realized in a society except the instrumental goods be first achieved. Now though liberty is no doubt indispensable to the achievement of ultimate goods, once liberty has been attained there arises the problem, what are we to do with it. The value of liberty is thus negative rather than positive. While we have it, we do not realize that we have it : we realize it and realize that it is a good only when we are deprived of it. In this sense liberty is like health or air. We normally value health only when we have lost it, or, having lost it, have just regained it, when the memory of illness is still vividly with us. Similarly with air ; we value it only if it is taken from us,

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when we value it so much that we proceed to die unless it is restored to us. So men normally value liberty only when it is denied to them ; but its denial is a denial of all that makes life worth living, so that the spirit of the prisoner cries out for liberty, and again for liberty, as the lungs of the man who is choking cry out for air ; for liberty is the air of the spirit.

But when liberty has been achieved, and we are free within limits to live our lives as we please, to seek some activities and to eschew others, and to pursue such ends as seem good to us, then, though our political difficulties are at an end, our ethical difficulties are, it is clear, only just beginning. For the achievement of freedom is the beginning of responsibility.

If men use liberty for good ends, liberty is a good ; if they use it for bad, it were almost better that they did not have it to misuse ; almost, but not quite. Like liberty, democracy is an instrumental good. It is not enough that a democratic government should exist ; we must ask what kind of life the democracy fosters. Nor is it an answer to this question to point to the creation of democratic forms. Similarly with the economic justice which modern Russia praises. Economic justice is a canvas on which can be painted the picture of the good life ; yet it is not itself the picture.

*Suggested Criteria of National Excellence. (5) Vitality, Intelligence and Loyalty.*

Similar considerations arise in regard to a number of miscellaneous characteristics by reference to which the excellence of States whose citizens possess them is fre-



quently assessed. Here, for example, is a State whose members are possessed of abounding vitality. Here is another whose citizens are exceptionally intelligent ; another whose citizens are loyal, united and patriotic. Let us consider, first, the community of energetic and vital citizens. Societies, like human beings, seem to pass through a succession of fairly well-defined stages. Of these, the first is a youthful phase, a phase of abounding vitality. This is a period of lively religious faith. The universe seems to have meaning, and men feel that they know within limits what its meaning is. To the individual life seems supremely worth living. The State expands ; victories are achieved in war ; neighbours subjugated, and subject territories acquired. Art is rude but vigorous ; government harsh but strong. Elizabethan England, early fifth century Athens, early Republican Rome exhibit all these characteristics of abounding vitality. Historians approve, but, one is entitled to ask, by reference to what standard is their approval bestowed ? For, in the light of our previous arguments, we cannot refrain from putting the inevitable question, along what channels is the energy of the vigorous society poured ? What ends is its vitality employed to serve ? Energy is in itself neither good nor bad ; its value depends on what one does with it. Those who organize pogroms are vital ; those who execute them are more vital still ; those who flog helpless prisoners are vital ; those who plan campaigns in which thousands are killed are vital ; those who plot to achieve power are vital, while the vitality of the financier whose fraudulent transactions beggar the thousands who have trusted in him is notorious. Jesus

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Christ, Socrates, Plato, Shakespeare, Mozart, Michael Angelo, Voltaire, Swift and Shaw were and are all persons of exceptional vitality, but so too were Torquemada, Thersites, Richard III., Ivan the Terrible, Genghis Khan, Iachimo, Uriah Heep, and Jack the Ripper. Vitality, in short, is not a good in itself ; it must be judged good or bad by reference to some end beyond itself ; its value in other words depends upon the use to which it is put. Under the heading of vitality we must include fertility, since a nation's greatness is often measured by the reproductive capacity of its citizens. When the birth-rate rises, the nation is said to flourish ; when it falls, to decay. But it is difficult to see why quantity of citizens should be accounted a sign of excellence. Is Russia a greater nation than Denmark, or India than England, simply because there are more Russians than Danes, more Indians than English ? Clearly not. But if quantity of life is not the standard, it is because *quality* of life cannot be left out of account. What matters is not the number of human beings who happen to be living, but the character of the lives they live. If their lives are desirable, the more the better ; if not, not. Now once the concept of desirability is introduced, we are constrained to ask, what we mean by the word "desirable," and our question can only be answered by introducing the conception of value.

### *Intelligence.*

Similar considerations apply to intelligence. A community of highly educated and outstandingly intelligent

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persons certainly seems to be desirable, and I do not doubt that a certain standard of education is of great assistance to, even if it is not a necessary prerequisite of, the effective pursuit of values. But the circumstance that a trained intelligence is desirable as a means should not blind us to the fact that, no more than vitality, can it be accounted an end. A man can use his intelligence well or ill ; he can use it to overreach his rivals, to plot the destruction of his enemies, to make deception plausible, or to increase the misery of those who are subject to his power. Men have even used their intelligences to devise means of increasing human agony by ingenuity of torture. In this connection it is worth bearing in mind that man is the only creature who seeks to inflict pain because he enjoys the spectacle of suffering ; the only creature who, when he wishes to kill, goes out of his way to contrive that death shall be slow and horrible ; he is also—or so we are accustomed to think—the only creature who is gifted with intelligence. The same conclusion emerges : intelligence is an instrument which can be used to compass good ends or bad. Its appropriate sphere is that of truth, and in our age its most distinctive manifestation is in science. The original motive of scientific research was the desire to discover the truth about the world because the scientist was a lover of the world, and it is natural to seek to know that which we love in order that we may enjoy it the more fully. But to-day scientists seek to discover the secrets of nature in order that they may win power over matter and manipulate it in the interests of government. Now one of the main interests of modern governments is the destruction of the subjects of other governments.

## *Loyalty and Patriotism.*

Many States account themselves great because their citizens are inspired by loyalty to their government and love of their country. Patriotism is usually regarded as good, and the knowledge that the citizen is willing to devote his life to his country is a source of pride to its rulers and of self-congratulation in its subjects. "We recognize only one kind of German abroad," writes Herr Bohle, the head of the Organization of Germans abroad, "the total German who, a citizen of the Reich, always and everywhere is German and nothing but German, and therefore National Socialist." But willingness to live for one's country is usually accompanied by willingness to die for it; to die in the endeavour to inflict death upon the citizens of some other country. Patriotism and solidarity, in other words, are usually valued as being essential elements in a nation's military greatness, and in the modern world those States who lay most stress upon them do so in order that they may vaunt their power and blackmail other States into doing their will.

If loyalty and unity are to be accepted as standards of excellence, man cuts a very poor figure in comparison with the insects. The termitary affords an example of unity which would put to shame the most integrated corporate State that ever germinated in the brain of a Fascist dictator. Of the ant-heap, it may truly be said that the members are permeated by the spirit of the whole, that they have no aim or interest outside the whole, and no title to existence except that which the whole confers upon them. The ant-heap, in fact, is the organ-

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ism ; the ants are what human beings are not,\* merely living cells in a body which transcends them. Are we, then, to judge the worth of human communities by a standard of merit applicable to termites ?

The by now familiar conclusion emerges. Unity and loyalty are in themselves neither good things nor bad. Their worth depends upon the ends which they are utilized to promote. Loyalty to government is a good, if the government uses aright the power which loyalty gives it ; it is an evil, if it is used as a basis for domination abroad and tyranny at home.

*Comment on the Criteria hitherto considered. Man's Inferiority to the Animal Creation.*

The truth is that by reference to most of the standards hitherto invoked human beings fare but poorly in comparison with the animals. They are not so brave as lions and tigers, and they are far more destructive ; they alone among living creatures kill members of their own species whom they do not require for the purposes of sustenance ; they alone kill for sport, for pleasure, or from a sense of duty. They are not as fleet as deer, as beautiful as peacocks, as fertile as rabbits, or as musical as nightingales ; dogs transcend them in fidelity ; the insect world could give them lessons in unity, and beavers in diligence. Compared with those of the elephant and the whale, their bodies are feeble. They are shorter-lived than the tortoise, and they are the prey of innumerable diseases from which the animal creation is free. It is

\* See the argument in Chapter XIII., pages 316-318.

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not, then, upon their possession of the qualities in which the animals outdo them that human beings will, if they are wise, pride themselves, nor will it be by reference to the standards of strength, ferocity, aggressiveness, vitality, fertility, fidelity, unity and loyalty, standards applicable to the pack or to the flock, that they will estimate the worth of their communities.

### *Suggested Criteria of National Excellence. (6) The Provision of Social Services.*

There are many who would answer the question, "What constitutes the excellence of a State?" somewhat as follows. "If it pursues an enlightened policy in the matter of the social services, ensures employment and good wages for all its citizens, maintains a high standard of housing, adequate sanitary arrangements, and efficient and comfortable hospitals which are free to all ; if it makes provision for the aged and infirm by a generous pension scheme ; if it ensures to all workers reasonable leisure and good holidays, and if in all these things it does not rest content with the standard already achieved, but seeks to improve upon it, then it is a good State." We are now, I think, approaching within reasonable distance of an acceptable criterion ; we are approaching, but we have not yet arrived. For all the benefits to which I have referred ~~belong~~ to the class of conditions of the good life ; they are, that is to say, not ultimate but intermediate ends. Now I have already argued that it is the business of the State to establish the minimum conditions which constitute the indispensable background of the good life

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for its citizens. I should agree, therefore, that it is the duty of the State to provide the services I have enumerated and add that, if it fails in this duty, it cannot be a good State. If a man is hungry or insecure, if he feels frightened, if he must go perpetually in fear for his old age, if he is a prey to constant disease or to the fear of disease, if he lacks the power to read or write, then he is not free and, being unfree, he can neither perceive the values in which the good life consists, nor pursue the values that he perceives.

It nevertheless remains true that of two societies that provide this background—and it must be remembered that no society that has as yet existed has provided it completely and most societies have not provided it at all—we could still say that one was better than the other. By reference to what standard? By reference to the standard afforded by the use which the citizens of the two societies respectively made of the freedom and leisure which the excellence of the State's social administration had guaranteed to them. For, I must repeat, good wages and good houses and leisure and holidays and health and education are not ends in themselves; they are only means. More precisely, they are liberators, freeing men from bondage to nature, to poverty, to pain and disease, and emancipating them from the need to devote all their energies to getting and scraping and saving to which they have hitherto been subjected, in order that they may—may do what? We are brought up short by our now familiar question. For, once again we have reached the same point, and before we pass beyond it we may pause to draw our by now familiar conclusion. The conclusion

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is that although a society cannot be a good society unless it provides the framework in which the good life can be lived, the fact that it does provide that framework, though it is a condition of social excellence, does not constitute social excellence.

### *Suggested Criteria of National Excellence. (7) The Production of Great Men.*

Some would say that it is in the number and eminence of its great men that the excellence of a society consists, and, more particularly, in the number and eminence of its writers, artists and composers. When men judge the Elizabethan age to be great, one of the factors which influences their judgment is the number and undoubted excellence of its poets. When they praise the Victorian age, they do so in part because it produced so many novelists of genius. Music is held to be the glory of eighteenth century Austria, painting of Renaissance Italy, and so on. A true standard of merit is, I should say, undoubtedly revealed by these judgments, for beauty is, I have insisted, a real value, and the ability of its citizens to perceive beauty and to embody it in poetry and painting and music, is, I should say, an integral factor in the worth of a society. But, though it is a factor in, it does not determine, excellence. When discussing wealth as a criterion, I pointed out that in all the wealthy States that have existed money has been irregularly distributed, the wealth of the society being monopolized by a very few men ; and I concluded that, even if we were prepared to accept wealth as a criterion, inequality of



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distribution would detract from the merit even of the most wealthy State. The same consideration arises when we are considering the bearing upon the merit of a society of the aesthetic and literary excellence of its citizens. An abundant production of great men combined with a low level of public taste might justly be described as an inequitable distribution of the value, beauty, or rather, of the capacity for perceiving, pursuing, and creating beauty, comparable with the inequitable distribution of wealth in the pluto-democracies.

Now it so happens that the eras in which most of the world's greatest works of art and literature have been produced have been comparatively uncivilized; for example, the ages of Homer and Chaucer, of the great Spanish painters (this applies both to the age of Goya and to that of El Greco), of the Icelandic Sagas, of the Gospels, and of the Elizabethan poets. The age of folk song, when many of the world's best tunes were first conceived, the age of nineteenth century Russia, when many of its greatest novels were written, were not pre-eminently ages of high general culture. On the contrary, the general level of taste was low, while the mass of people lived rudely, cared little for beauty, and were too immersed in strictly utilitarian concerns to have time or energy to spare for those of the spirit. When, therefore, we seek to measure the worth of a country by the degree of its people's concern with beauty, whether in literature, in music, or in pictorial art, we must do so by reference to the general level of public taste prevailing among the mass of citizens. We then find that the most cultivated societies are by no means always those in which the

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greatest geniuses have arisen. A concern for and interest in things of beauty combined with a high general level of taste, such as obtained among the aristocrats of eighteenth century France, are often found in conjunction with a comparatively meagre output of first-rate artistic production. Nevertheless, it is, I insist, to the former as much as to the latter that we must look, when we are proposing to give a society high marks because of its members' attachment to beauty. Even in eighteenth century France, this attachment was exhibited only by a small privileged class, albeit it was widely distributed throughout the members of that class. We have yet to see a society in which it is common among all or most citizens.

As with the value beauty, so with the values goodness and truth. A society which receives high marks for moral virtue will not be one which produces a few great saints and an army of small sinners ; it will be one in which a high general level of morality is observed by all or most citizens. And not only a high general level, but—for a society can no more stand still in respect of its virtue than a plant can stand still in respect of its growth—a gradually rising level. Nor would a society be praiseworthy if, while it produced a number of great *savants* in philosophy and science, the great mass of its citizens remained uninterested in truth and valued intellectual pursuits only for the sake of their useful by-products.

*Conclusion. The Standard afforded by the Values.*

I have now by implication indicated the answer which I should give to the question, by reference to what

is the excellence of a society to be measured. The answer is by reference to the extent to which its members perceive, estimate at their true worth, and seek to pursue ends which are valuable in themselves. These, I have argued, are goodness, beauty, truth and happiness, entering at the same time the proviso that happiness is not to be directly pursued, but is a value which invests a life which is devoted to the pursuit of the other three. In proportion as the members of a society perceive, desire and pursue these ends, it is a good society ; in proportion as they do not, it is a bad one, bad even though its members enjoy liberty, wealth, leisure and security ; for liberty, wealth, leisure and security are not ends, but means to ends and if, possessing them, we do not use them as instruments for the pursuit of those ends which are ultimate, we are the more to blame than those who, lacking our opportunities, lack also our opportunity to neglect them.

Two subsidiary matters remain to complete our treatment of politics in relation to value.

(1) *The Entry of Political Activity into the Foreground of the Good Life.*

I have sought to represent politics and ethics as two interlocking branches of human activity. I have argued that it is the business of the State to establish the background in which alone the good life can be lived by its citizens, and maintained that the end of politics is to be found in an activity beyond politics. But there is one respect in which political and social considerations ad-

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vance from the background and assume a position in the foreground of the good life. The good life, I have urged, is one which is devoted to the perception and pursuit of the values. Of these values happiness and moral goodness are two. Now both these values may be in part realized in the service of the community. To many individuals, indeed, a life of vigorous and useful public service is the most easily accessible avenue to happiness. Such a life, moreover, develops their best qualities and evokes the highest that they have it in them to be. It is in the service of the State that this kind of life may be most fully lived—not necessarily in the maintenance of the State as it is, but in the endeavour to transform the State as it is into something which is nearer the heart's desire. This is the truth that lies at the root of the absolutist theory of the State which I criticized in the last chapter,\* though, the truth is, as I have tried to show, distorted out of all likeness to itself. The recognition of this truth requires us to assign to the State a more positive part in the good life than we have hitherto envisaged. For in providing the individual with opportunities for the development of virtue and the realization of happiness, the State is not merely supplying the background of the good life ; it is assisting to fill its foreground.

### *The Need for Federation.*

In conceding this much it is, however, important that we should bear in mind that the State is not a unique or final form of human organization, and that the

\* See Chapter XIII., pages 307-322.

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functions both negative and positive which are claimed for it by the absolutist theory described in the last chapter could be discharged by other forms of political organization. Indeed, there is some reason to suppose that the development of moral virtue and the realization of happiness in public work will, in the twentieth century, be best promoted by service to the international ideal. It is certainly the case that the function of providing the background for the living of the good life by the citizens of the modern European or American State can be most adequately discharged by some form of international, or, at any rate, of federal organization, which will supersede the aggressive nationalism of existing sovereign States. Patriotism, in fact, is not enough just because the State is not the whole, or, rather, because there is a larger whole of which the whole, which is the State, forms part. Once it is admitted that the individual may fulfil his personality by serving ends other than his own, and feel interest in and make sacrifices for the welfare of wholes of which he is a member, there seems to be no logical reason for stopping short of the whole which is mankind.

### (2) *Man's Growing Emancipation from Biological Needs.*

It will be observed that I have omitted from my account of what makes a State a great many of those biological and utilitarian considerations which are usually invoked in discussions of national greatness. There are two reasons for this omission. (a) The first entails a reference to the passage in Chapter X. in which I sought to exhibit man as a being who, originally obsessed by

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utilitarian considerations and biological needs, has gradually evolved to a level at which his mind is *sometimes* capable of being moved by impersonal ends and devoting itself to disinterested activities.\* The growth of the human mind has in fact outdistanced the barbs and spurs of nature, and we can no longer be defined as organisms whose activity can be adequately described in terms of response to physical stimuli from without, and experience of natural and instinctive cravings from within. We find ourselves more and more detaching our cravings and urgencies from the biological imperatives that produced them, and attaching them to ends which have no bearing upon survival. Thus we demand beauty apart from sex, invent romances and write lyrics ; we desire to know the truth about nature apart from the power that it brings us, and we seek to achieve a goodness which is not wholly explicable as a rationalization of personal expediency or social need. For the first forty years of our life we are no doubt still largely swayed by biological and utilitarian imperatives, but by forty-five the business of mating and getting and bringing up a family is for many of us largely finished. After forty-five, the exigencies of biological and economic need begin to recede and leave men for long and increasing periods free. This freedom which is in part due to the added length of human life is a new feature of the life of man. As civilization advances, it will begin earlier and last longer. It is in terms of the use which we make of it that our worth as individuals and the worth of the society to which we belong must be measured.

\* See pages 233-249.

(b) *That Ends are the Concern of Philosophy, Means the Concern of Science.*

Secondly, as I pointed out in the first chapter, our age is one which, obsessed with means, is guilty of forgetting the ends to which they are means. The men in the key positions, the men who hold the power and set the standards of our world, are only too often men devoid of culture, contemptuous of the past, and ignorant of its wisdom. The conclusions of philosophy and the teaching of religion have no place in their thoughts and feelings. Their interests lie in mechanics and organization, lie, in other words, in means. The contemporary reverence for science plays into the hands of these men, for science is itself concerned with means and is valued because it gives us a mastery over means. But, as I have already argued, science is ethically neutral. In itself it is neither good nor bad. The effect of science is to enable us to gratify our desires and to further our purposes. If these are good, science is itself a good precisely because it enables us to gratify and to further. If they are not, then science is an evil. When we ask the question, what desires and purposes are good, we enter a world in which science has no part and can have none ; we enter, that is to say, the world of value. It is philosophy which prescribes those ends which are valuable ; it is philosophy, therefore, which can tell us in what direction the power which science confers should be used. We need to-day a development of the philosophy which is concerned with ends commensurate with the development of the science which is concerned with means. The foregoing pages

have been written with the object of offering some contribution, however, inadequate, to that development. Drawing upon the traditional philosophical wisdom of the past, I have tried to show how in terms of value and in these terms alone, a right occupation can be found for leisure, a right use for power, and a right conception of ends.

I venture here to repeat the point which I made at the end of Chapter XII. It is only if values are real and objective, that any of the conclusions that I have sought to draw deserves respect. If values are subjective, then my conclusions subside into the category of rationalizations ; in themselves they will be neither true nor false ; or rather, they will be true only in so far as they reflect my own tastes and desires ; true, that is to say, for nobody but myself. If values are objective, then there is at least a chance that my conclusions may be true. In this sense and for this reason the demonstration of the reality of value in the early part of this book is an essential foundation for the practical conclusions which have been developed in the later.



## POSTSCRIPT

### *Religion and Men's Need of It.*

I have a Postscript to add. It relates to a topic which, throughout this book, save for a brief glance in Chapter VII., I have sedulously avoided, the topic of religion. It will not have escaped the notice of the reader that many of the arguments which I have used, especially those in Chapter VIII., for the reality and objectivity of values, are similar to arguments commonly employed to demonstrate the existence of God, and that the attitude which I have sought to define to the values, more particularly where I have spoken of them as the objects of human aspiration and the standards for the measurement of human conduct, has much in common with the attitude known as religious. Why, it may be asked, do I not take the further step and postulate a unity behind the values, the unity, namely, of a divine person.

I am not prepared to deny that there is such a unity. On logical grounds it seems to me that it is possible, that it may even be probable. Moreover, if such a unity is to be postulated, we may plausibly regard it as the sort of unity which belongs to a person. On this view, the values will be the modes of that Person's manifestation. Or, to put it in the language of belief, they will be the ways in which God reveals Himself to man, the forms

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under which He permits Himself to be known. Having gone so far, we might reasonably go further and postulate the existence of a mode of apprehension in addition to the rational, the moral, and the aesthetic by means of which the values are recognized, which directly reveals to us the reality and the nature of this Person. This mode of apprehension would lie beyond those which are involved in the recognition of values, and the Person revealed would Himself stand behind the values, in the sense in which a person's character is revealed in the expression of his face and shines forth in the glance of his eyes.

All this, I say, may well be so. I do not wish to deny that it is so, but equally I do not wish to affirm that it is so. There are three reasons for my inability here to take this further step. First, this book is concerned with such conclusions as may be derived from the study of philosophy. Its object is to indicate what philosophy has of value to offer to the times. Now I do not think that by philosophy the existence of such a Person can be demonstrated. If it is a fact that He exists, the fact is, I think, to be established by methods other than those of philosophy. These methods belong to the spheres of theology and religion.

Secondly, though, as I urged in Chapter I., this generation has need of a creed in which to believe no less than of a code by which to live, though its agnosticism is tinged with a certain wistfulness—it would like to believe, yet cannot, and is so incommoded by its lack that it goes awhoring after all manner of strange gods and sacrifices itself upon every variety of savage altar in its desperate endeavour to fill the spiritual vacuum left by the decline of the old beliefs—though, I say, I am convinced

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of all these things and hold that the need to believe is one of the root causes of our present discontents, yet I doubt if the old beliefs can fill the bill. For various reasons into which I cannot here enter, the religion of Christianity as taught by the organized churches seems to me unlikely to satisfy the need which has grown so urgent that men are driven to make an idol of the State and to accord to men the reverence due to God, in the vain hope of satisfying it. That we need a new religion or a new presentation of the old, is obvious. But it is not I who can supply the need, and so I here make shift to offer the next best thing that I can contrive, which is not a religion, but a contribution to a philosophy for the times.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, I am as yet totally unable to see how a good God can be the author of this world of evil and suffering. Nor do the various explanations by which men have sought to solve this difficulty seem to me to be in the least satisfactory. Now the values, while they are the objects of human aspiration and the goals of human effort, are in no sense the creation of the evolutionary process which, as expressed in the developing consciousness of human beings, seeks to apprehend them. The values are not responsible for this world ; they are the objects of its desire. Thus while a God who is the unity behind the values seems to me to be possible, He can, as I see it, have no part in the creation of man and man's world.

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